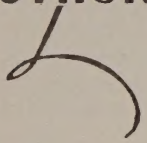
One Hundred French Romances

VOL. I

One Hundred French Romances

by
27 FRENCH AUTHORS



VOL. I

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THE LATE BERNARD

Alexandre Arnoux

I assure your Worship that the only reason I have not murdered my cousin Bernard sooner is that I was brought up in bourgeois surroundings amid strong religious influences. After such a childhood as mine, some force, some principle always remains to stay one on the very edge of the abyss.

My hands are clean, not blood-stained. My will, and my will alone committed the murder. What a paradox is the justice of man! I did not strangle a passer-by in a fit of drunkenness or to enable me to pay my rent, without premeditation almost with pity and a sort of miserable sympathy akin to that experienced by the matador when he gives the coup de grâce to the bull, his means of livelihood, by the general when he sends his troops over the top, his means of promotion. By God, perhaps when he sends this saint to martyrdom, or by a little child who sucks a stick of barley-sugar, and weeps to see it melt away . . . Had I done this I would have been persecuted by my kind, the machinery of retribution would have been set in motion.

On the contrary, I murder deliberately, my whole being approving the crime, and no one takes the slightest notice, no one interferes with me in any way. I come and go freely, my name is not struck from the electoral lists. I am not requested to resign from the vice-presidency of the Carabineers of Gros-Caillou. The blade of the guil-

lotine remains in its sheath. Better still, I demand protection against my victim, and my demand is well founded. As a matter of fact it is I who am the injured one in this affair. Bernard sleeps in Bagneux cemetery; he has a thirty-year concession; wreaths and a cross. What more can he want? While I, the poor murderer, the wretched assassin, the loser in the affair, I am asked to pay for an old lady's kneecap! That passes the limit. I crave your Worship's protection and will tell you the story as briefly as possible. Consider it carefully and judge. Here is my absolutely truthful report.

. . . . . .

Bernard, saving the customary respect for the dead, was an unmitigated bounder. Tall and thin, always darkly clad, with his small head, his arms held closely to his sides, he looked like a rolled-up umbrella or a wind-tossed cypress in a cemetery. I saw him first at the Gare de l'Est, standing on the platform beside his trunk. It was then that I was struck with his funereal appearance. The somewhat coffin-like trunk with Bernard oscillating beside it made one instinctively carry one's hand to one's hat and begin a Pater Noster. And in comparison, the coming and going of the crowd, the shrill whistle of locomotive, the cries of the pillow-vendor seemed vain and trivial.

Bernard observed me shyly. I had just married his cousin Louise whom he had loved since childhood and who had refused him; she had preferred my ruddy cheerful self. In a fit of despair he had thrown himself into the Moselle. Unfortunately a misguided locks-attendant had fished him out. Ever since that episode he had retained a sort of half drowned aspect, hair, mustache,

fingers and coat-tails looked as though they might easily drip: a cypress when in repose, a weeping-willow in motion. Once in Paris he attached himself to us like a clam. Impossible to persuade him to return to his province, to his Moselle, where after all, it is possible with a little good will, to disappear. Having come to Paris for a few days only, he settles down there out of sheer spite and in the hope of injuring me in some way. He rents a room opposite our apartment; he watches us from his window and invites himself to dinner three times a week. He finds a job as a commercial traveler. He is ravaged by jealousy. I am very patient with him. It is rather flattering to be a cause of suffering to another man. He takes advantage of the situation, makes himself at home, and at the end of six weeks the trouble begins. He attempts to poison my wife's mind. He tells her that I spend my time running after other women, that the typists at my office are not remarkable for their virtue, that no one really knows how I spend my money, that it is always the most beautiful and the purest of women who are the most brazenly deceived by their husbands because they are blinded by their very purity; that other husbands spend less on drinks, tobacco and similar indulgences and more on their wives, and so forth, and so forth. . . .

My wife is impressed. If I seem to be less tender it is because I have women friends. If, on the other hand, I am gay, lover-like, pressing in my attentions it is because other women have inspired me with desires that I seek to satisfy at home. There are sighs, concealed tears, red swollen eyes, nerves, distress, insults, plates thrown at my head and finally silence. A frozen, deadly sepulchral silence. I attempt to turn Bernard out of the house. Im-

possible. What! I would deprive poor Louise of her one confidant, her protector, her only consolation. There they are the two of them, silent, terrifying. She, overcome, convulsed with sobbing, he, balancing himself on his pigeon-toed feet, shaken by a storm of commiseration and rage. And between them, myself, idiotic, violent, motionless.

That was my life, your Worship.

. . . . . .

It lasted three years, without respite. A man brought up outside the Church could not have stood it a year. My religious upbringing enabled me to endure it for three.

However, on the first day of the third year I try to re-act. I pull myself resolutely together, I begin my attack. I will beat him yet, this cousin who makes my life a burden, all that is necessary is to discover his weak, his vulnerable point. He is no longer in love, his hatred of me, his determination to ruin my life have taken the place of all other sentiments. It is I who now occupy Louise's old preponderant place in his thoughts, love slowly and insidiously has been superseded by deadly hatred. The possession of a woman, the ruin of a man, equal joys, ends to be attained by an equal degree of obstinate perseverance . . . but one excludes the other.

I have sought. I have sought. Bernard lives in deadly fear of pain and disease. He carefully avoids drug stores when walking, he trembles before a doctor and reads his condemnation in his face. I have him!

I begin with leaving treatises on hygiene on my table. Then it is the prospectus I have sent to him, allusions to his appearance, discreet sympathetic smiles if he coughs, little attentions that worry him. Next, I take him to a

lecture on tuberculosis or venereal disease. I invite a talkative medical student to dinner; I make him shine. He tells the story of an operation, enlarges on the unreliability of diagnostic science and the incredible abundance of bacilli. I buy a medical dictionary profusely illustrated with cuts of cirrhosis of the liver, lung lesions, ulcers, and I lend it to Bernard to charm his leisure moments.

God be praised. I breathe again. My wife gradually becomes her normal self, she forgets her jealousy; I begin to enjoy life anew while my enemy consults, has analyses made of urine and of sputum, diets and forgets me.

Wily, untiring, I torture him; I give him no peace, he becomes thin, ghastly, he fades away. No longer a cypress—a mere feather duster.

I never let him alone, I am his vice, the poison in his veins.

Louise laughs, grows plump, kisses me in dark corners, encourages my ardor.

I enjoy to the full my secret triumph.

Bernard wastes away. He lives in fear. An open window means pneumonia; a closed one, tuberculosis. If he drinks wine he is menaced by gout; if water by typhoid; alcohol spells delirium tremens, tobacco, endocarditis. At the barber's he risks skin disease, in a restaurant unnumbered contaminations of the mouth, in the subway grippe, in the sun fever, in the shade goitre. Nothing is aseptic, nothing permissible.

And as for women! Continence leads to perversion and insanity. The most careful contact may have unimaginable results . . . paralysis, decay. What to do? A remedy, one single radical remedy to free oneself from

the tortures of doubt. A remedy . . . One night, your Worship, I persuade Bernard to drink. I accompany him to a place I will not name. His will-power is gone, he gives himself up to alcohol and the rest with the zeal of a maniac.

For a week's time he doubts, examines himself, rebels collapses . . . On the seventh day he turns on the gas.

. . . . . .

And I say to myself: "What a good time we'll have." Ah, indeed! I no longer bear Bernard the slightest ill-will, I send a wreath. I have won the rubber, we are quits.

Louise cries a little, experiences a melancholy satisfaction in imagining that he died for love of her. All goes smoothly, but Bernard is not disarmed, as I learn, to my cost, on the morning of the funeral. A delicate scruple had prevented me from attending the ceremony. He might have been shocked, might he not, might have thought in his coffin: "How dead I must be, how reduced to nothing, that my cousin should follow me to the grave." I wanted to spare him that humiliation. So I pretend to have important business on which depend my chances of promotion, my future. To go to my office I take at the École Militaire the street-car that goes to Montrouge. Unfortunately, Bernard's funeral passes Avenue du Maine, as does the street-car line. The road is up, it is congested with laborers, switches, traffic blocks. We pass the funeral under the railway-bridge, it catches up with us at the rue de la Gaité and we pass it again at the rue de Vanves. Three encounters. The first time I turn carelessly away and look absent-minded. All my hatred surges up in my heart. I will not salute Bernard the

corpse when Bernard the man has given me three years of hell. Take off my hat for him. Never! A old lady in black and a midinette cross themselves, a laborer lifts his cap. The street disapproves of me. I don't care. I whistle to myself. The old lady looks at me wondering at the extent of my boorishness. In Paris one may jostle the living but the dead must be treated with respect. The incident is over at last.

At the second encounter I stick firmly to my resolve. The lady in black touches my elbow and shows me the hearse upon which my wreath is well in evidence. The other passengers murmur. The midinette sneers: "I don't suppose he ever had a death in his own family." The laborer looks me up and down scornfully, the conductor asks me for my ticket and examines it with suspicion. I remain adamant.

But the third time, as I stamp my feet and defiantly put my hands in my pockets the street-car bursts with indignation. Insults and sarcastic advice rain on me from all sides. The old lady passes the utmost bound of civility. I take her by the arm, not roughly, just to calm her wrath and to prevent her from breathing into my face. The midinette squeals, conjures me to let such an old lady alone. "Old," screams the victim, "old yourself!" The laborer intervenes and knocks his box of tools against my leg. Uproar, tumult, general mêlée. The funeral had passed on and is gaining ground, a policeman pulls out his notebook, a dog barks, a chauffeur honks. The old lady recoils, misses the step, falls out onto the pavement, shrieks that she is being assassinated and puts her kneecap out of joint. The entire car, witness of my brutality, accuses me. The policeman takes notes.

And I am sued for assault and battery and ordered to pay for the old lady's kneecap.

Is it fair, your Worship? Is it just? Am I responsible? I demand sanctuary, aid and protection. If Bernard had not come to Paris, if he had not poisoned my existence, would I have been obliged to convince him that it was necessary to die? If he were not dead, would he have had a funeral? If he had no funeral would I have neglected to salute his coffin? Would public opinion have crushed me with its resentment? Would the old lady have missed the step? Would not her precious kneecap still be working admirably? And it is I, I who must expiate, who must pay, who must hear myself condemned? No, your Worship, I know that you will defend my cause. The memory of Bernard shall go to prison, his heirs pay for the kneecap. Otherwise, fear the despair of an honest mortal driven to the utmost extremity.

THE NIGHT ROUND

Pierre Benoit

Captain, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the château of Cadwalla, in place of His Royal Highness, Prince Grégoire. These gentlemen have been informed that you have consented to dine with us, and they charged me with the task of expressing our gratitude to you for conferring this honor upon us. I must first apologize because His Highness has not received you himself. But, misfortunes never come alone. . . . In short, I want to explain that Prince Grégoire lives absolutely alone, and leaves to his humble assistants the duty of maintaining at Cadwalla its ancient renown for hospitality.

I begin by apologizing for my bad French. . . . I think you said you knew a little German? No, no, Captain, we could not allow that . . . we insist upon greeting you in your national language. Permit me to introduce first myself: I am Doctor Hermann Fulvius, of the University of Goettingen, private secretary and librarian to His Highness Prince Grégoire of Cadwalla. This is the Baron Tobel, ex-major in the Sixth Regiment of Pomeranian Dragoons, and at present Governor of the castle of Cadwalla; and lastly, Mr. Wolfgang, ex-lieutenant of the same Regiment, and now, in charge of the administration of the domain. You see, Captain, you are among soldiers. Naturally, I am not speaking for myself since I have not had the honor of bearing arms.

Sit down, gentlemen.

I apologize, Captain, for having to ask you. . . . There, now, we are all formally introduced. So, you belong to a Regiment of Dragoons, too. Baron Tobel had an idea that you were connected with the Commission of Interallied Control sitting at Budapest. You were on your way to the Castle of Windischgraetz, when a motor accident obliged you to stay the night at Cadwalla? We are almost glad of the accident that has brought such an honor to us. Take a little more of this ginger soup. . . . Every stranger, and especially every Frenchman, is welcome in our country. I say our country, Captain, in speaking of Hungary; but I don't mean that we three have renounced, in any way, the other great nation that we always place first, namely Prussia. But, we have lived so long in Hungary, that we have learned to love her as a second home. We admit this to you that Germany's principal regret in losing the war, was that she could not give a lesson in loyalty, by rewarding the nations who had helped her in the struggle. If the victory had been ours, don't you believe you would have had more cause for rejoicing than you have, being the allies of England? But all this is not irreparable. In the next war, we shall work together. You will put your North Sea coast at our disposition and, with the help of our Big Berthas, as you call them, we will bring the pound back to its senses.

If you take a little of this trout, I'm sure you will enjoy it, for Wolfgang only caught it this morning.

You would like to do justice to the merits of wild boar roast, and especially to those of the Castle of Cadwalla. I regret to say that is a point on which we do not quite

agree. Look, Baron, the glass on the Captain's right is empty. The war, you were saying? No, it is true, War never settles things. Still, we should like to point out that the territories you claim you conquered, in the recent conflict, have not suffered much from the invasion. No, the decadence of Cadwalla cannot be imputed to the war. There are other causes, going further back. Have no fear, Baron Tobel, I will commit no indiscretion. Instead of wasting your time in making signs to me, you would be better employed in paying attention to the glass on our guest's left. I need scarcely boast of the merits of Tokay, need I? Where was I? Ah, yes. I was saying that any one who knew nothing of life at Cadwalla at the beginning of this century, doesn't know much. No doubt, you have often heard stories of Magyar hospitality and Hungarian munificence. But remember this: the most splendid lords of the country, the Festeticzs and Esterhazy, were mere children compared with the Princes of Cadwalla.

That goes further back than yesterday. The Empress Maria Theresa slept in the bed where you will sleep to-night, Captain. At that time, Haydn was master of the Prince's Chapel, and there was a company playing Italian Comedy. Then four hundred guests could be received at once and we ourselves saw two hundred and fifty. That was in 1896, when the Empress Elizabeth visited our master. Some months later, when that hapless sovereign fell at Geneva a victim to an anarchist, Prince Grégoire saw to it that all the peasants and country people of his lands were in mourning. That meant providing twenty thousand outfits for them.

Yes, such was our glory, at this time, Captain. From

where you are sitting, you can see nothing through those high windows, nothing. And yet, you have all the left wing of the Castle before you with the Salle des Fêtes on the ground floor, and guest's room on the first floor. Well, we can swear that, at the time of which I am speaking not a single night passed, except in Holy Week, when those candles and candelabras were not all lit. And as for hunting—I won't mention it. Baron Tobel and Wolfgang will tell you that the famous kennels of Esterhazy were far inferior to those of Cadwalla. Each hound had its own kennel. The most famous English public schools did not treat the sons of lords as well as we treated our dogs. They had three "recreation grounds": one for the big dogs, another for the lesser ones, and a third for young ones. They were attended by six veterinary surgeons, whom I used to examine in general knowledge. From these minor details, you can form some idea of the whole. Baron Tobel, Wolfgang and your servant seem to have belonged to a lost civilization.

You are looking at this rose and crystal vase, with curiosity. You are right. It was given to André de Cadwalla by King Mathias Corvin, conqueror of the Sultan Bajazet. The liquor in it is nearly a century old. It is sliwowitz, our national whisky. Try some of it. A little more, Captain. It's strong! And what a flavor? We will go into the salle de jeu, with your permission, for coffee.

You have honored us, by saying that you are not in a hurry to go to bed, after such a good dinner, and that you would enjoy a game of cards. It would give us great pleasure. What do you play? Bridge? You would prefer that? You only increase our regrets, Captain, for

we are unable to comply with your request. Quite, you guess the reason. The French are invariably a most far-sighted nation. Yes, Captain, the hour is approaching, nine o'clock, when His Highness requires the service of Wolfgang and Baron Tobel. Nine o'clock, time for the night round, you see. But I am forgetting you don't understand. I will explain. Please leave me alone, Baron Tobel. You are really annoying with your frowns and grimaces. I can keep a secret as well as you, and it's not my fault if this is an open secret. Anyhow, here's Monseigneur's valet coming to look for you. The Captain requests you to thank His Highness, and to tell him that he has not passed too bad an evening in our company. Don't be too late returning. If it's not after ten o'clock when you come back, perhaps His Highness will risk his luck at bridge.

. . . . . .

These gentlemen have gone out, without shutting the door. . . . Please, Captain, I could'nt allow you. . . . I'm still active enough, in spite of my sixty-six years. I will serve you a little of this. I needn't ask if you know what it is. It's Armagnac, old Armagnac from your country, the only international force, Ah! Ah! Ah! Just a drop more. . . . A game of piquet, while waiting for the other gentlemen? . . . A queen, ace, my turn. From the beginning luck's with you, Captain.

A king? good! Three aces? Good again! I've made a blunder—your turn to play, Captain. You called seven. What's the matter? Ah! I see. You are puzzled by the light from time to time in the other wing of the castle. I told you of it before. It's the night round. For

twenty years, I've seen it pass at the same time each night.

Come nearer the window, if you like. We can go on with our game presently. See, there it is. You see a soldier leading the way with a lantern. There's the shadow of Baron Tobel, and there's Wolfgang. You see that tall bent figure? It's our Master, His Highness Prince Grégoire of Cadwalla. Try to make him out when he passes by one of the windows in the corridors, for you'll have no other chance of seeing him. Ah! they are out of sight, now. They'll be inspecting the other wing of the château. Soon, they'll pass the door of the late Princess Hedwige's room, and the Princess Stephane's, then. . . .

Why is it you can't see Monseigneur? I know that's perplexing you, Captain. What if we take a little more Armagnac? You'll be at the Château of Windischgraetz to-morrow, you said, didn't you? My friend, Doctor Bruniki, Duke Procope's secretary, has not kept the same reserve as I have. He'll not fail to tell you all. . . . But after all, I'm good enough . . . *In vitium ducit culpae fuga,* as Horace says. Certainly, it would be better to hear the story from one of His Highness' household than from an outsider. What is the time? Twenty past nine. I have time, for our partners won't be back before ten. But you must promise . . . for Baron Tobel would never forgive. . . . Yes, quite, on your word of honor, as a French officer. You will never see His Highness, Captain, because . . . on account of . . . I'm seeking a word that's not too strong but which will make my meaning clear. I can't find one. Ah! well, I must resign myself to confess: Monseigneur is mad.

Mad, that's the only word for it. I hasten to add that it was not always so.

In the glorious days of the château, no mind could have been better balanced than Prince Grégoire's. But alas! trouble came, great trouble. *Post equitem sedet atra cura.* I quote Horace again, when Tragedy jumps on to the saddle behind him, the best rider's often thrown off. Prince Grégoire is scarcely sixty years old. You would think he was eighty. Well, I was telling you, that at that time, nearly a quarter of a century ago, the Prince was married to a most charming lady. The Princess Hedwige was a fellow countrywoman of mine, for she belonged to the ducal family of Hesse. She was fair-haired, blue-eyed, a marvel of beauty and goodness. They had one little daughter, Princess Stephane, she was only three years old and promised to grow up as beautiful as her mother. It was Ascension Day, when her governess took the child out for a walk, near the stream that crosses the park, and when she was not watching her, the little Princess fell into the torrent. A quarter of an hour later, the child's dead body was found.

To understand the extent of this catastrophe, you should have seen Cadwalla in the days of its splendor, compared with its present state, stagnating beneath its ivy and brambles. It is easily explained: Princess Hedwige died of grief in three months. As for the Prince, alas! it would have been better if he too. . . . Listen to the rest of the story, Captain, and you will see how deeply attached we were, and still are, to our master. Yet, we wonder whether it would not have been better if he had been taken from us, than that he should live as he does. You could not imagine a more terrible form

of madness than that which seized him after the death of the Princess. He is still a prey to it, but its form has changed, for various reasons, which are difficult to explain.

Captain, I have not the slightest intention of offering you an apologia vita sua or a self-justification.

I am modest by nature, and in any case, I should not have time. I will simply say that, without being one of the leading lights of psychology, I have studied this science in the best sources. I am old enough to have made the acquaintance of Fechner, who, along with Broca, was the founder of psychophysic. Of course, I followed Charcot's theories and I am quite well up in the last discoveries of the Italian School. But I owe the greatest debt to my excellent master, the famous Winterthur of Goettingen. I am his favorite disciple. Although I find his creed of strict finalism rather narrow, I am obliged to admit that in undertaking the cure of Prince Grégoire, I applied one of Professor Winterthur's theories.

I have just rung, Captain, for you to have something to drink. Beer or champagne? I assure you I take champagne. Just think, what the cellars must be like in a château where, before this trouble came, there were more than four thousand visitors in all each year; now, we have scarcely thirty.

You will understand that under these circumstances our stocks are not renewed, and these other gentlemen and myself are condemned to the fate of never drinking wine less than twenty-five years old. It is not unpleasant, but, in the long run, injurious to the health.

I am coming back to Prince Grégoire's madness. All forms of madness are strange, Captain. But this one had

the peculiar characteristic of not showing any connection with its cause, in its manifestations. Complicated matters seem easier to explain in German, which is so rich in metaphysical terms, but I hope you will understand me. I will relate simply facts. There is no doubt that Prince Grégoire loved his little daughter dearly, but after all, she was only three when she died. It is certain too that Prince Grégoire cherished an exceedingly deep affection for his wife, Princess Hedwige, and it was after her death, that the madness seized him. But and this appears most strange at first sight—it was the memory of his little daughter and not of that of his wife, which caused the crises when we had to hold him down for weeks on end sometimes. However, he realized that his wife was dead, and he remembered every detail connected with her death. But, he absolutely refused to hear any one mention the death of his daughter. In his poor confused thoughts Stéphane had never died. The story of her death was but a miserable fiction invented by his persecutors, Baron Tobel, Wolfgang and myself, who prevented him from seeing his daughter. Remember that the unhappy man had held her poor little stiff body in his arms, that he never missed a single day without going to the Chapel, where he spent hours before his child's grave. All these memories were wiped out now. He knew that Princess Hedwige was dead, but he was convinced that Princess Stéphane was alive, and we were hiding her.

In face of this problem, what would you have done? Probably, what I did. There could be no chance of curing straightway a madness that had taken so powerful a hold on him. But there was a chance of making its form less violent. Captain, I see you understand my

meaning. A little more champagne? Ah! if only our peoples could agree! What might not be expected of a war fought by German soldiers who had been drinking champagne, and French soldiers with German shells in their cannons?

You have grasped my meaning, and it is not difficult. I will give you an example, which seems to me conclusive. It took place at the University of Padua, and I myself was a witness. There was an Italian captain in hospital there, under treatment for a violent form of insanity. He believed he was Négus Ménélik, and, because, he had read somewhere that tradition grants him the Queen of Sheba as ancestress, he used to go about calling and shouting for his grandmother, Queen Balkis. He raged at the luckless people who happened to go near him. What did Professor Finzi, who was attending him, do? He ordered a strange costume to be made up to look as though it might belong to a barbarian queen. As you may imagine, no one paid great attention to strict historical accuracy. A devoted and sensible nurse undertook to wear the costume, and to do everything the poor man wanted.

Prince Grégoire's attacks showed no signs of giving over, so I mentioned my idea to Baron Tobel. He agreed to it heartily and we set about executing the plan. Alas! that in practice it should fall so far from what it had been in theory.

You have guessed what it was, no doubt, Captain. We were to bring a little girl of three or four years of age to the Prince, and tell him she was his daughter. There was nothing to be lost if we failed, for the Prince's madness could take no worse form than it had. On the other hand

we might succeed in making his attacks less violent. This we did, and to a greater extent than we had dared to hope. But you will see that we landed ourselves in a network of complications. I shall always say it was Baron Tobel's fault, and this is the main reason for the disputes between us.

We had to find a little girl of three or four years of age, and the younger the better, in my opinion. Better still if she had not learned to talk at all. So off went Baron Tobel and Wolfgang ahunting. They came back one morning with the child. It would be a fine tale for a primary school reader, wouldn't it? A feudal lord stealing a poor peasant's child; but as a matter of fact, the child was not stolen, but taken on a distinct understanding. Her worthy parents were glad enough to be rid of her, moreover, her parents were Ziganes.

Yes, the gypsies, Captain. That was Baron Tobel's first blunder. I will go on relating events in their chronological order. Stéphane's substitute was truly charming. By strange good fortune, she was not unlike the other girl, in appearance, she who was lying in her shroud in the vaults of the lords of Cadwalla. I remarked that she had a more olive complexion, and darker hair, whereupon Baron Tobel consigned me to the devil, telling me I could do my own dirty work the next time.

I have hardly the heart to describe to you the scene when we introduced her, after careful preparation, to the poor madman. I thought his tears of joy and his exclamations of gladness would never end. We had to invent a story about the Princess being carried off by gypsies, and how after a long search, we had finally traced her. We were each given a reward: I daren't admit how

much it was. But we were obliged to keep the money, you see. And I can assure you it was a poor compensation for the distress and worry we had to suffer from that time on.

Captain, you will understand that if Baron Tobel had instead of resorting to that accursed race, gone to look among some good family of peasants near here, all our troubles would have been averted. We should have had a flexible nature to deal with, instead of the frightful little demon we had chosen.

It is impossible to imagine what we had to endure from this substitute for Princess Stéphane. Picture to yourself a wretched little gypsy treated with almost royal honor, and you will perhaps understand the unheard of absurdity and melodrama of our situation. One day, in the middle of the service, she pulled the archbishop's beard. Another day, she herself rang the bell. Another time . . . what's the use of making a list! And she was a beautiful child, with it all. But her hair was raven black; and we could have wept, Wolfgang, Tobel and I, when we stood in front of Princess Stéphane's portrait, with her lovely golden hair.

And the Prince? Well, what happened to him exceeded all our expectations. Our trick had succeeded. He was quite mad—there's no other word for it—over that child. His violent attacks were a thing of the past. But as you can easily see, it was no sinecure for us three to keep up the illusion under which he lived. Bear in mind that when his senses came to him, he was called to fulfill the ordinary duties of life: to receive letters and see people. We have endured this life for fifteen years, always dread-

ing lest our pious edifice of lies should be shattered at any moment.

It was at this time that began that pompous and pathetic comedy, the night round. As I have had the honor of telling you, Captain, we explained to Monseigneur that his daughter had been carried off by the gypsies. Well, from that time on, his sole idea was to prevent a second kidnaping. The château has been closed up. It's like living under siege: every night, a patrol of four men, armed to the teeth, prowls about the corridors of Cadwalla. It's Prince Grégoire doing the round with his company of servants.

Just come up to this window. Look out into the courtyard. There they are passing. They've inspected three wings of the château, and they've still to do the fourth.

It isn't a soldier holding the lantern now, it's the Prince. Notice how he goes along, ferreting in every corner. Presently, they will go up the north staircase, and pass Princess Stéphane's room. The Prince will listen under the door, half open it perhaps, so as to make sure that nothing unusual has happened.

It's a sad thing, Captain, yes, a very sad thing, for poor Baron Tobel and poor Wolfgang. Worse than you would think. For the room, Princess Stéphane's room, is empty.

Yes, it's empty again, Captain. The inevitable happened. You can't restrain nature. The little wild creature has flown away.

How did she get to know, this little gypsy girl? What does it matter? It was bound to end that way. Wolfgang will tell you it was the Baron's fault, and the Baron says

it's mine, and I say it's Wolfgang's. But, as I said before, what does it matter? The little demon spied on us and must have got to know our secret. With all the good will in the world, Captain, men's works are uncertain and imperfect.

Wolfgang and the Baron will soon be back. Let's finish this bottle of champagne, and go on with our game of piquet. They needn't know I've told you . . . but, anyhow, they'll tell you all about it to-morrow, at Windischgraetz.

This time, I'm fourteen to ten, Captain. Pardon? What did you want to know? What became of her? One day there was a crowd of gypsies near the château. You know the type: a bear, a wolf, children in rags; old witches.

We ordered them to be off without delay. They obeyed. But in the evening, we searched in vain for Princess Stéphane's substitute. At this moment she must be somewhere on the vast puzta in the wilderness where hordes of these strange nomads have passed ever since the world was the world.

The Prince? Hush. From the day he found out about the false Princess' flight, his madness seized him again. But now, he's as gentle and quiet as a lamb. He talks of Stéphane as though she were still there; he believes she is still there when the night round passes her deserted room, every one lowers his voice and walks on tiptoe.

Here are the gentlemen. It's your turn to cut, Captain.

LISE

Rene Bizet

On my arrival in Lisbon I felt, as soon as I had breathed its fragrant air, a sort of premonition of what was to befall me. Those old steep streets, the vivid coloring of which no amount of filth can quite conceal, catching between two disreputable hovels, the soothing glimpse of green trees, and blue waters, the dance of those dusky fish-girls, swinging from the hips, like bayaderas, made me realize how impossible it would be for me to remain in such an enchanted town without risking the loss of my heart. In any case I had not the option of leaving, being in Portugal on business, and besides, the idea of meeting with some fantastic love affair rather appealed to me.

It was December, and as evening fell, the air became chillier and I quickened my step. Whilst the hotel porter who was carrying my luggage followed me, grumbling as he went. I admired the brilliance of the jewelers' windows, in front of which groups of poor people are wont to stand, fascinated, hypnotized as it were, by the flash of diamonds. I watched the leisurely movement of the idle crowd which makes the best of the fine weather, loitering out of doors absorbed in endless and aimless gossip.

We came to the Duvas Hotel, where I had decided to put up. A porter took my bag, gave it to a servant, who in turn passed it on to a valet. I was then led up to the fifth floor, and shown into a small room, meagerly fur-

nished with a bed, a chair, and a washstand. The proprietress, whom I was not expecting to see so soon, and who had followed us up the five flights of steps, very much out of breath, said to me, still panting from her exertion:

"The charge will be three thousand reis."

This considerable sum represents fifteen francs of our currency, so I was quite satisfied and could hope for nothing better. I was left alone and promptly opened the window.

If luxury were banished from my room, at least I enjoyed a most wonderful view from it.

An indefinable perfume, consisting chiefly of oranges and roses, stole up from below and intoxicated me as thoroughly as a heady wine might have done. I breathed in the evening air for a long time, and with it, all the subtle poison of the insidious, tempting atmosphere.

For one accustomed to the harshness of our Northern climates, nothing is more dangerous than this Southern languor. It takes away all memories of the past, and urges one on, tempts one on, to the mysterious present, and still more mysterious future.

One is incapable of the least resistance, against a look, a touch, a song. Routed soldiers are better disciplined than our passions, when abandoned to themselves, or worse still, to the first chance acquaintance!

I was called back to the present by the dinner bell, and went down to the dining-room, where the maître d'hôtel led me to a small table.

I sat down, and instinctively looked around me to see whether, by chance, there should be any one I knew, though I had no reason to suppose there might be.

I saw only smartly-dressed couples, who paid no attention to me, either when I came in, or throughout the meal, and who seemed to be mostly residents of the hotel.

The newcomer's only resort, in such a case, is to read a newspaper, and that is what I did.

I finished before any one else, and left the room, rather at a loss what to do. I did not know how to spend my first evening in a town which I feared to know, as one fears to love at first, and wondered whether I should go out or not.

So I sat smoking in a comfortable rocking-chair, near the main entrance of the lounge, trying to make up my mind.

Suddenly my reverie was interrupted by the soft strains of a Neapolitan serenade, sung by a perfect voice in a near by salon.

That song was the crowning touch! Nothing enhances the languor of Latin countries, as much as those Italian melodies, however commonplace they may be.

They have some power, some dreamy fascination, which in any other surroundings would fall flat, but in that atmosphere, have an irresistible power over one.

This music, with a guitar-like accompaniment, moved me in spite of myself. It was the expression of my inexplicable melancholy, of my indefinable anxiety, and the clear purity of the voice enhanced its power.

I rose brusquely. The porter answered my question before I had time to ask it.

"It is a young lady who is staying here with her parents, Mlle. Lise Bernier."

"Is she French?"

"Yes, sir. I think so, at least. If Monsieur will take

the trouble to step into the salon, he will see her. He will be proud of his compatriot."

I opened the door of the salon, and entered quietly. A few people seated around a small table were listening with rapt attention. At first I only saw the singer's back. I took a vacant seat on a sofa next to an old man who, with eyes raised heavenwards, was savoring the extreme bliss of the satisfied melomaniac; and I too became an attentive listener.

The young girl touched the keys of the piano with grace. She was dressed in white. As far as I could judge, her movements were as harmonious as her voice and it was a joy to follow them while imagining the face I had not seen. The song ended. People applauded. The old man next to me sighed deeply, then turning to me, he said:

"It is very beautiful, is it not?"

I was sincere, when I answered:

"Very beautiful indeed, and so completely in the atmosphere, if I may say so."

"That's it! That's just it! In the atmosphere. That is exactly the word. You are perhaps a musician?"

"No, but like you, sir, I love to listen to a beautiful voice."

He went on:

"A beautiful voice singing a beautiful song. This Italian music is divine!"

This was hardly the place nor the time for a discussion of the merits and shortcomings of "bel canto."

"It is charming," I answered.

"There exists no other! At least, not for the voice!

And as for this modern music, you must admit that it is abominable!"

I admitted nothing and was saved from further discussion by the girl, who began to sing another Italian song.

This time my neighbor nodded and beat the floor gently with his foot, in time with the music. His entire person radiated joy and from time to time he glanced at me to be sure that I was sharing his pleasure.

I was. I felt helpless before the music, just as I had felt helpless before Lisbon.

When it was over I applauded with the rest. The girl turned and smiled her thanks, then ran towards us. At first I saw only the fair hair, the clear eyes, the flutter of the white skirt, and, before I had recovered from my surprise, the old man placed a hand on my arm, and said to me:

"My daughter, Mlle. Lise Bernier."

"I am truly honored—"

She was quite close to me. She gave me a soft little hand, bowed, and seemed to be quite embarrassed when I complimented her on her singing.

"I am very glad, if I have not made myself too ridiculous," she said. "My father has a perfect mania for making me sing."

It is always rather difficult to continue a conversation of this sort and I was about to retire when the girl's mother joined us and I was obliged to repeat my appreciation of the music.

"I am delighted to have met a compatriot, Monsieur," said the father, "and I hope you will allow me to offer you a liqueur and a cigar. Will you come to the smoking-room?"

I accepted the amiable invitation and followed my companions. This was certainly not the way I had expected to end my first evening of solitude! My romantic soul adapted itself peacefully to the bourgeois atmosphere created by these simple people and their daughter.

They were neither Argentines nor Portuguese, but French like myself, with the good principles which my countrymen take with them everywhere in their well-packed luggage.

The cigar was good, the coffee excellent, and the cognac stimulating. We spoke of Lisbon, of Portugal, of our return to France and to Paris, above all, of Paris, as becomes all exiles. Mlle. Lise Bernier spoke not a word.

However, that evening, I felt that I loved her.

Her chief charm was her immaculate virginal air. Her blue eyes lacked brilliancy; the oval of her face was not perfect; the chin was too short; her soft dark gold hair was carelessly dressed. She was rather small and slight, delicate and almost frail in appearance. But all these imperfections were forgotten when she smiled; then her face blossomed like a white rose.

What emotion could animate her? During our first talks I used to watch for the moment when a chance word, a chance phrase, might so touch her soul that her eyes would betray her feelings. But I was never able to surprise any sign of mysterious emotion. She was always the same, always sweet and untroubled. Her simple candor was intimidating; it was no foolish naïveté, but the real innocence possessed only by the pure in heart.

She had been modestly educated. She had grown up in the midst of honorable people of limited intelligence.

Until her eighteenth year she had remained at her boarding-school; her parents treated her as a little bourgeoise destined to a peaceful provincial life. She herself had read little, had shown little curiosity as to books. She had only two passions: Nature and Song.

When one's own youth is over, one invariably judges youth badly. Men are jealous of their own past, and no one finds grace in their eyes. Because they cherish a marvelous and inexact souvenir of bygone days, the joys and sorrows of other people in their twentieth year seem uninteresting, insipid, in comparison. When it is a question of a young girl, they are still more severe. They no longer understand simplicity; to them it is hypocrisy or stupidity. Thus, no one is more alone in the world than a young girl—a young girl whose grace should be welcomed as a gift from heaven.

An old-time fairy would be more at home in the midst of us than this young creature ready to love.

A melody of Schumann's, "Le Noyer," rang in my ears, in my memory, every time I saw Lise. All the ardent tenderness of the song tore at my heartstrings. If you have never heard it you cannot understand the dreams, the hopes, the fervent longings, which Lise conjured up. They swept after her like a splendid court train!

But all that is another story. The one I have to tell is more banal, more "like the others." Probably, by my fault alone.

Her parents had found me congenial. They showered invitations upon me, and as they were not leaving till the end of the month, it was decided that I should go sightseeing with them. Excellent people, the Berniers!

The father, as I had guessed at our first meeting, was

a retired shopkeeper who loved traveling, and, above all, was anxious to add to the number of cities he had visited, as a hunter counts the hares and the partridges he has killed.

The mother was equally uncultured. All her life she had worked hard in her home and in her shop. She was happy in having to work no longer, but created for herself a thousand little cares and worries, which with her took the place of thoughts.

I was the only Frenchman they had met on their travels in Spain and Portugal. The mere fact of my being a Parisian won me their friendship. They were not in the least suspicious; a few amusing stories, my expressed admiration of their daughter, of her voice, of her singing, was enough to gain their entire confidence. I possessed it, and to it I owed the walks where Lise and I exchanged our first confidences.

We visited Lisbon conscientiously and according to a regular program that always excluded the unexpected from our trips.

To begin with, Monsieur and Madame Bernier walked beside us, and we talked of the wonderful weather and of the wonderful Paradise for travelers that Lisbon was. Then the pace of the parents slowed down and they allowed us to go ahead as though we were two children, to be watched from a distance, but given a little liberty to play.

And side by side we walked and talked. Balem and its old cloister that looks as if it were made of sugar; the zoölogical garden where the eucalyptus and rose-laurels mingle their leaves and their perfumes; the botanical garden where the trees of the whole world grow

amid tiny brooks dolls' gardens; the narrow old streets and houses; the more fashionable quarters in the Center, that seem to have been built but yesterday, where the yellow houses seem to be plated with gold—all these heard our talks, futile or tender, the slow dragging steps of Monsieur and Madame Bernier, and their calls to us when we were out of their sight and they thought us lost.

Certainly there was much that was banal in what Lise said to me; much that was stupid in what I said to her; but neither of us noticed it, and the mere sound of our voices was a joy to us. Sometimes my hand touched hers. Sometimes I took her by the arm. She never blushed, even when I pushed back, with a familiar finger, a truant lock of hair. She smiled at my smile as though she were only the reflection of my heart made young again. Like a pool of clear water she sent me back my own image of the past.

I was thirty-five years old and nevertheless my eighteenth year had not known more spontaneous impulses, more fantastic illusions, a blinder confidence. I found again the simple words, the charming ways, in which the first emotions of the heart manifest themselves. The eternally blue sky of Lisbon, the gardens with their patches of sunlight and shadow, lent their marvelous setting to my enthusiasm. I had never lived before!

I had never loved, never suffered. All my wounds were healed, and I could not even find the scars.

Sometimes in the evening she came to my room with me to talk. She never did so without the permission of her parents. She would come into the badly-lit room like a soft light, and sit down near the window opposite me.

One evening, I remember, there was a thunderstorm,

and the air was electrified, as it were; I do not know what temptation assailed me. Lise was leaning out of the window and I stood behind her, not daring to approach, as though I were not sure of myself!

What inner demon whispered in my ear?

"Why," he murmured, "be duped by this apparent innocence? How can you, you who have lived in the world, believe in the candor of a soul that already belongs to you, and asks for no better than to give you her body? You are exaggeratedly sentimental. You believe in each love comedy that is played for your benefit, and each time you applaud without realizing that it is you who will be the victim. A few blonde curls, a few innocent glances and childish caresses suffice to make you imagine that you have found, at last, the sweetheart dreamed of in your youth, in your romantic youth.

She is there before you. Examine that profile; there is nothing celestial about it. Your angel is as others, neither better nor worse. She is waiting, waiting for your kiss! Neither women nor young girls appreciate such delicacy as yours. They think that your scruples are due to disdain. Take her in your arms, kiss her lips. She is worth being loved, but like the others—"

I was troubled. An invisible hand seemed to push me towards Lise in spite of myself, and I was on the point of putting my arms about her.

But just at that moment she turned and said gently:

"What are you doing there? Come over here by me!"

I felt suddenly as if my temples and hands had suddenly been refreshed with clear, cool water. I went nearer to Lise, and we talked as if nothing had passed in my inner self.

Suddenly a telegram from my wife recalled me to Paris.

. . . . . .

For I have been married for ten years! I am the father of a family, I should be serious, settled, attached to my home, anxious to care for those who are dependent upon me; and I do not fail them. When by chance I see myself in a glass I can never believe that so many responsibilities are mine. It seems to me that I have not changed since I was a youth. A few lines, a few white hairs, a little gray in my mustache, is all that there is to warn me that time does not spare me. But I know all the horror of the daily task, the care for the morrow, the work hastily done to pay for Madame's hat or for the child's shoes—all this "condemned for life" labor that wears one out.

Certainly I am very fond of the woman to whom I have entrusted my life. She is a good comrade, and gayer than I am. When I am not with her, she takes her child to see her mother, pays visits, goes to teas, but never complains. When I am in my study she comes with her terrible account-book, and shows me budgets and deficits that would be the despair of a parliamentary commission of finance.

My son, who never takes anything seriously, plays under my feet like a young dog. And I look on, and I listen—

I contemplate my bourgeois and paternal self, and smile at my own gravity. I forget that if I am there it is in order to lean over my desk, to add up columns of figures, to answer the letters of clients, and to earn the daily bread of the two beings who hold me in their arms and

whose caresses are often more painful to me than the lash to a slave.

But what is the use of revolt? I was an obedient child; I remain an obedient husband. I love my apartment, its cozy warmth, its curtains drawn as though to shut away from me the movement, the lights, and the many temptations of the street.

I love this comfort, this tranquillity that gives me the illusion of a definite peace. But oh! Never open the window! Never let the swallow enter!

Naturally I told my wife nothing of my life in Lisbon. I hid my souvenirs. It had been understood that Lise would write a card as soon as she returned to Paris. I awaited news of her with all the impatience of a young lover on the eve of his first rendezvous. The situation was a false one. Lise ignored my marriage. My wife knew nothing of Lise. But I was happy. I cannot remember ever having passed more charming moments than during these fantastic hours.

"You are always in the clouds, since your return from Lisbon," said my wife. "What are you thinking about?"

"About the business I had to leave just as it was succeeding!" I answered carelessly.

And so I had plenty of leisure to evoke the image of a young girl in the shade of the palm-trees at Belem and Cormbra. I went out and never felt tired. I repeated to myself that Lise loved me and thought only of me. For me everything transformed itself into her face, her glance.

I came back to my wife, as in the past I had come back to my mother, animated by a mysterious inner joy, that was a joy to me alone. I remained silent throughout a meal, then I astonished my family with my sudden gay

chattering. I sang, I would have danced like a child, had I not retained in spite of everything my sense of the ridiculous. All the pleasures of the world are not worth the tiniest secret of a heart nor its little springlike bubbling—

At last I received the promised card. Luckily the concierge gave it to me as I was going to my work in the morning. Lise asked me to dine at her home the following evening.

. . . . . .

With a beating heart I climbed the staircase of her home. The Berniers received me as though I were their child. Lise wore a light dress that made her happiness as radiant as a supernatural light. She did not try to hide her happiness at seeing me again; she laughed, she joked, she took my hands and looked me in the eyes; and I believe she would have kissed me if she had not been afraid of shocking her parents a little too much. The cold outside, the comfortable warmth of the stove, the lamplight, all contributed to create an atmosphere of sweet intimacy such as I had never known before.

And yet, there would have been no less tenderness in my own home, had I brought the same soul, the same spirit there. But I made no comparisons. I gave no thought to my own family. I was having an escapade, and was playing my life again; all the romance I had choked back into my heart for ten years, blossomed forth like a scarlet flower.

The joys of our first love are composed of movements, glances, touches, of all that one does for the beloved, of all that isolates two beings in their adoration for one another. Lise and I spoke together in this silent language,

and Monsieur and Madame Bernier never suspected anything of our maneuvers. They talked to me of the household, of their cares, of their plans for the coming vacation. I listened without trying to understand; the words they spoke simply marked for me the flight of those minutes that, to-day, in spite of all my efforts to bring back their riches, are only the ashes of memory.

. . . . . .

During a whole month I lived only for our meetings. All the divine shamefacedness of love, all its impulses too, fill these hours that one steals from life's fleeting day, and Paris has no equal for giving to such meetings the attraction of a fault.

The rainy winter sky, the shining streets that mirror the lights, the constant stream of carriages, the noises that make a monotonous accompaniment to our remarks, gay or sad; everything contributes to give to feelings that have no other refuge than public places, the soul of vagabonds' longing for rest and peacefulness.

And the cafés? How many have we known that were only one murmur of lovers? The benches, the chairs, were crowded with men and women, thoughtful, happy, despairing— In dark corners, the comedy was played as at a theater.

As for me, I knew only her glances, her young hands clasped in mine, our simple caresses.

If I close my eyes or if I walk in the twilight, I still hear her voice repeating those sweet pet-names that make one smile, and bear witness to the fact that lovers always become children again—

How was I ever able to go home and take up my life beside my wife and child? How could I have lived this

double life, calm my exultation at a given hour, hide my joys and my tears and talked-of household cares, when my soul held converse with a lyrical and demented god? And how could I have continued to lie to her, to this Lise who never hid her thoughts from me? We spoke of the future but rarely, because the present sufficed us; still sometimes, like all passionate creatures who feel the need of certitude, she would think of the days when we should be alone, just the two of us, together forever, and I had not the courage, the strength, to tell her that her hopes were vain. It was not that I wanted to deceive her, but I was sorry for her, so sorry for us. A priest who no longer believes, does he say to each believer: "Believe no more! All that you have been taught is deception! All that helps you to live is false!"

He keeps his discovery to himself and continues to preach the Divine Word that he knows to be human. And so I left Lise the illusions on which her love subsisted and almost believed that nothing would ever reveal the truth to her. I do not regret my shortsightedness. At least our happiness was spared the torture of a slow and lucid agony.

. . . . . .

The sky was gray. It was cold. It was a Sunday near the end of March. The day before, Lise had told me that her parents were expecting some cousins from the country to spend the Sunday with them.

As I was free I asked my wife to come for one of those walks on the Boulevards by which the honest bourgeois family celebrates the day of rest.

After luncheon, with the child between us, we took the classic walk, lingering before the shop windows and

the cafés; silent and sleepy, we kept step with the crowd. I could easily believe that I was still with Lise, and forget that I was the father of a family in the exercise of his highest functions. But I used to have days of interior exasperation, of extreme nervousness, during which I talked as little as possible in order not to quarrel with my wife, especially when I was seized with a violent disgust of my miserable double life!

At such moments I longed to run away with Lise, to turn away that I might not see tears, and to forget, in some distant corner of the world, that I had ever loved. My heart was full of contradictions, and only one face, one smile had the power to calm me. And after all, this tumult of sentiments, this anger succeeded by calm and peace, this madness melting into tender joy; is it not the genius of love itself, enormous, chaotic, monstrous?

But that Sunday I knew that I was not to see Lise and my passing melancholy turned to despair. The three of us kept step with difficulty; the child was tired and heavy flakes of snow began to fall. The wind tore at the veil of snow that wove itself around the trees, people slipped on the sidewalks and sought shelter under doorways. I decided that we had better go home although my wife suggested stopping at a tea-room.

I felt the need of asserting my will in a futile discussion and I started homewards.

It was then that I saw her, standing at a street corner. She was in front of us sheltering under her umbrella, and wore the little dress that I called the "couleur de rendez-vous" one, because it was sober and discreet. I trembled, and I cannot tell to this day what irresistible force made me quicken my step in order to join her. It was absurd,

mad, I realized it and yet I continued impulsively on my way, followed by my wife and son who could not understand this sudden haste.

I reached her. I touched her on the arm.

"Lise! Lise!" I exclaimed.

She turned, and I stood before her in the snow, lamentable as a beggar, with my family watching me as though I held out my hands for alms.

What did she think when she saw me thus? She said nothing. It was I who spoke first:

"I thought that you were not going out to-day?"

She answered at random—perhaps in order to hear her own voice:

"So did I—so did I—" then she was silent.

Suddenly I felt that she had understood, that I was going to lose her, that everything was over, and I stammered:

"Yes—yes—au revoir, Lise—"

My wife stepped forward:

"Mademoiselle, my husband has not introduced us—"

And truly I do not know what happened after that. I remember only my child clinging to my hand, my wife speaking words, words, words; in the distance Lise's umbrella shaken by the wind, and myself, with bowed shoulders, making no headway, as though I had to drag a dead body through the snow—

THE OLD PEOPLE

Pierre Bost

When you approached the Refuge you saw first of all a rusty gate, with a little tinkling bell; after that a wooden porch, and when you passed the porch, you saw a path crossing the garden and leading up to the terrace, where there was a row of poplar trees, and some seats on which old people were sitting.

There were twenty-three old people in the Refuge: ten men and thirteen women: twenty-three old people clinging to life, for they had come into the Refuge to live, not to die. They quietly watched time passing them by, and by force of their inertia and their tranquillity, they were spared. They were like children playing hide-and-seek, but they were wily and cunning and they smiled serenely because they had had the better of the struggle for so many years.

The men were all widowers and the women widows. They survived like hard rocks to bear witness to a lost world, and they had endured so long that it seemed as if Death had entirely forgotten them.

Some of them were reading newspapers, some knitting, others were talking, and one wondered what they could find to talk about all the time. One rose from his seat, and the others watched him, noticing that the effort is more painful to him to-day than it was yesterday. Many of them wore spectacles, but they do not look at

anything in particular, as they sit in rows on the terraces, like so many steamers ready to set off.

But a bell rang, and even the deaf understood what it meant. Twenty-three forms moved towards the house; leaning on sticks, many of them looked no taller standing than sitting on the benches; they were like dolls rather than men with their black clothes and white faces. Their shadows preceded them, but they were pale shadows, for the sun was not strong in March; still it was sufficient to entice them out of doors, and they were wrapped in shawls, for the aged are always cold. They made slow progress, struggling painfully like wounded men towards a hospital.

On the top step of the stairs there stood a little bald man, with a white face and white beard. It was M. Julien, the steward of the Refuge; he smiled in a kindly way and called out in a thin little voice:

"To table."

And the twenty-three shadows hovering between the steps and terrace, answered with a soft murmur which might be taken to mean "Good morning, M. Julien."

The old people climbed the seven steps, placing both feet on each step, and leaning on their sticks, and made for their mid-day meal. Each of these shadows was not only a weak human body, it was also the monument of vanished things and forgotten men; although it seemed to crumble, it did not die. An old man is a library and a museum; and children know this, for they ask the aged such questions as one would seek to find explained in a book. These old people had the same type of face as most of the aged: ruddy skin, or else a dead pallor, which they inherit from their grandfathers, for they too had

grandfathers once; they were bent as their ancestors were, and concerned with the same thoughts and ideas as their forefathers. None of them had any distinguishing peculiarity, for all were in like position; poor, aged, without relations, without art, without culture. Their qualification for entering the Refuge was that they were the last survivors, the proud unknown captains of lost vessels, and they were true to their duty, as witnesses and examples. They all took pretty names that are soon forgotten, for others have borne them before, and others will bear them in the future; names like Richard, Mathew, Laurent, Germain, Durand, Leblond, Martin, Marchand, and so on, and if they like, they call themselves Pierre Durand, Marie Dupont, Marguerite, but they had almost all forgotten themselves: they were simply the twenty-three old people of the Refuge.

They tried to form a crowd. Who is it wearing a cap? Which of the women has a blue apron? This old man who has just finished reading one page of a novel with a colored back, is he the one who wipes his feet so carefully on the mat? And another who tries to wipe his nose on his tie, who is he? They follow another, and mingle like stars in the sky. Just now, when they tried to say "Good morning, M. Julien," it was their united voice that was heard; but now scattered on the steps, they climb slowly up like an insect with many limbs; if one falls, all the others are affected like Alpine climbers bound by a rope, and if one of them sneezes, you would expect to see twenty-three square handkerchiefs brought out.

Having left their sticks in the hall, the twenty-three go into the dining room. Beside each plate there is a glass,

a box, a pill and a tablet arranged like a choice hors d'œuvre. When they are seated, the twenty-three solemnly celebrate the medical rite; one pours the liquid on to his spoon, another puts the powder in his tumbler, a third swallows a big white tablet. All is done in silence. Then they bend over their plates, and take the food necessary to sustain this artificial life. They do not speak, and they receive passively the kindly glances of M. Julien as he walks slowly across the room.

M. Julien is steward of the Refuge, but he might well have been taken for one of the inmates. He was hoary and old, broken and ill, for he had lived on this earth for seventy-five years, but he did not complain, for he was patient and kind. He loved everything: the old people, the silent house, he loved to see to the provisions and cooking, he loved sunny days, when the twenty-three basked on the terrace, and he loved wet days when they dozed in their rooms. He loved Wednesday when they all assembled in the Hall to hear Mlle. Coule, the descendant of the founder of the Refuge. She was old herself, and she used to read aloud a children's book. He loved life, because he had lived so long, and he looked forward to death, the inevitable, without bitterness, because it would provide him with new things to love.

M. Julien loved even M. Niclot, the asthmatical old Governor, who ruled the destinies of the Refuge with severity. M. Julien was the only one who loved the human kind sufficiently to have any affection for this dry and harsh old man. As soon as the old people saw the superintendent, they drew up close to one another as though to protect themselves from the breath of a cold wind. M. Niclot would go along the corridors without

speaking to any one unless it was to find fault, and disappear into his study. He was a tall man of gloomy appearance, and he held himself straight and stiff, as though he were indifferent to all. In his office he would stand erect even when writing and when he leaned his elbows on a certain high table in the room, he seemed to assert and reassert that the devil had given him five feet nine inches which he intended to keep. He said the devil when he meant God, and the old people always had the superintendent in mind when they mentioned the devil.

M. Niclot had gained an excellent reputation among his superiors for his honesty amounted almost to a disease, and his conscience was as rigid as his body. He sometimes told the story of one of the Refuge inspectors, who had secretly promised him, M. Niclot, a good promotion if he helped some suspicious enterprise. M. Niclot had boxed the inspector's ears for him, and, being an upright and a righteous man, he sent in his resignation to the committee, who refused it, and dismissed the inspector instead. M. Niclot was congratulated and promoted. Some people declare that when he boxed the inspector's ears, M. Niclot knew that the inspector was about to be rewarded for his services. However that may be, M. Niclot was famous for his integrity.

But mere virtue was not enough to win the hearts of the old people, who feared M. Niclot and kept out of his way, while they felt safe and happy with M. Julien who loved them and took care of them. He superintended at meal times and gave out rations, encouraging the weakly, and restraining the greedy, while talking to all in a fatherly way.

In the refectory where we saw them bending over

their plates, the old people seemed to M. Julien like his own flock, gathered into his fold from all corners of the earth, from different families to share the tranquil communal life of this family, of which he was the father and the head. He smiled happily, for he reflected that his work would go on after his death, and he believed that he would die soon, for every day he became more and more bent and his strength was failing. He knew that seventy years are a heavy burden to bear, and he hoped that his poor, weak friends would be stronger in their age, for he loved them so much.

Now he was looking at them in his kindly way, and wondering whether he should let them know of the surprise in store for them. He began to speak three times, but each time he restrained himself, but finally cleared his throat, and asked in his thin little voice:

"My friends, do you like calf's liver?"

M. Julien was a Christian, and a good Christian ought to be ready to appear when the Great Judge calls him. M. Julien's moment had come. He had scarcely asked the question, when he fell to the ground unconscious.

The servant dropped the plates she was bringing into the refectory, and rushed with a cry towards M. Julien, while the old people, startled, gazed at the broken china. They were quite stupefied. Then they turned their eyes towards their friend who was lying on the ground, with his head on the servant's arm. Hearing the cry, two women and a man ran into the room, and they helped to raise M. Julien. He was very pale, and there was a great blue bruise on his forehead. He opened his eyes and tried to speak, but his lips seemed weighed down; he could not speak, but he looked at his friends, and made

clumsy signs to tell them to go on with their meal. But the old people were no longer hungry. They looked at one another, as though some dread disease which they had always expected, had just stalked into the room, and they wondered which of them would be struck. In face of this sudden collapse, they realized that M. Julien was not only their steward, and their superior, but also an old man like themselves, and they trembled as though the whole group had lost a little of their hold on life.

M. Julien was put to sit by an open window, his forehead had been bathed, and he had to drink a restorative. He thanked those around him by slight gestures, for he was trembling all over, and his hands were so unsteady that he clasped them together. He succeeded in saying: "Eat . . ." "My friends," choked in his throat but he could not speak the words. There were tears in his eyes.

The old people got up and went nearer the sick man. Already, the women were giving advice, and the men were calculating how old M. Julien would be. At that moment, they were all talking at once; the cook told how she had seen M. Julien collapse a month before; but she had promised him to keep the secret; an old woman was telling how her husband had died; and an old man whose brother had perished in Newfoundland, was drawing the distinction between sudden easy death and death from natural causes, and another was saying that M. Julien was "a good man." Then they wept, for they knew that death would stalk among them again and strike one of their frail bodies, and maybe they hoped to frighten this stealthy creature, even with their feeble voices, or maybe, alas! they accepted his deadly stroke, hoping that the creature would be satisfied and would

spare them. M. Julien heard what they said, but he did not blame them for being cruel for he knew they were innocent and sad, and he loved them.

The door opened; M. Niclot entered, and there was silence. He stood on the threshold, erect and cold. The old people went back to their places and ate their soup in silence. M. Julien tried to get up.

M. Niclot went towards the window. He had been told that the steward had collapsed, and he said:

"Oh, oh," and asked M. Julien whether it was the first attack. M. Julien shook his head. M. Niclot went on:

"Of course, you can't speak . . ."

And he coughed to show that every one has his little complaints.

"You had better go upstairs to rest a while. I hope it will pass."

Then he went out.

M. Julien was carried to his bed, and he thanked those who helped him with his kindly eyes. He made a sign to show that he wanted to write and scribbled:

"Tell them they will have the calf's liver to-morrow, and ask them to come and see me sometimes, in turn."

Around the table, the old people looked at one another stealthily to find out who was the frailest and each one wondered within himself how long he might still live.

Let us go into M. Niclot's big study, where the high table looks like a scaffold placed among the well-arranged books, and find out what kind of man he was, what to expect from him.

M. Niclot was tall and thin. He was bald, clean-shaven, and of a grayish complexion; he achieved a

certain dignity by his rigid carriage. He wore a violet rosette in his coat, and his hands were thin, red and unshapely. He wore steel-rimmed spectacles; spoke very little, and drummed on the furniture with his hard nails.

A great event had occurred in M. Niclot's life: he had been called one day to sit on the jury at the assizes, and it so happened that he had voted for a man's execution. Since then, he had considered himself a philosopher and a martyr to duty. The night after the condemnation of this man M. Niclot had meditated deeply, and he ended by solving the problems of the Universe.

He perceived that the first law of the Universe is that of Balance, as manifested by the three secondary laws of Reproduction, Rotation and Conscience. It is evident that such a universe is admirably organized, even to the least details. From the moment of this discovery, M. Niclot devoted his life to perfecting his universal cosmogony, and to spreading knowledge of it by word of mouth and by writing. He worked late into the night, drawing up pamphlets to be printed and distributed.

He did not believe that man was mortal, and this explains his interest in the old people. It would be in vain to enter into the details of his doctrine; it is sufficient to note that the Law of Equal Balance requires the personal Coefficient of Expansion to be in inverse ratio to the Proportion of Life accorded to a given individual. Thus the more active and energetic a man is, the greater are his chances of dying; on the other hand, if a man ceases to spend his energies in action, he thereby increases his chances of long life. In a completely passive state, if such a state could exist and (as M. Niclot never forgot to add) *mutata mutandis*, man would be immortal. This

is why such passive creatures as tortoises and crocodiles offer the most striking examples of extreme longevity. In the human kind, M. Niclot cited airmen as examples of the active type who die young, and priests as instances of the passive, for they generally live to be old. In short, the ideal old man ought never to die, if he led a life of rest, tranquillity and solitude. If a man passes a certain age, it becomes more and more difficult to die, according to M. Niclot's theory.

It cannot be said that M. Niclot's doctrine is not rational, but it is true that M. Niclot's conclusions were too arbitrary, and his methods of experiments too severe. If his intentions were laudable with regard to leading these old people into a quasi-eternal state, the means he employed were not of the most desirable. To maintain the inmates in a drowsy state of tranquillity, he asserted that they should be fed as little as possible, and it was on this question that his ideas came into conflict first with those of the steward. M. Julien did not agree that old people should be starved, even on the pretext of prolonging their lives. Thus, defying the metaphysics of the superintendent, M. Julien gave the old people as much soup as they needed, and that was why M. Niclot despised the steward so much.

So, the Refuge lived in an atmosphere of defiance, for M. Niclot never dared to let it approach a quarrel, and the twenty-three old people lived on in peace and tranquillity. Although they knew nothing of learned theories, they loved M. Julien because he was kind, and they did not like M. Niclot because he was harsh.

Such was the life of these two men and the twenty-three old people, until the day when M. Julien collapsed

during the meal. He was laid up, being paralyzed, and unable to speak. M. Niclot was vexed and surly, and he thought M. Julien "a stupid old fellow to let himself die." Indeed, M. Julien awaited death without resisting, and it annoyed M. Niclot to have his doctrines falsified, especially by his personal enemy.

After their friend fell ill, the twenty-three old people roamed about the corridors, or drowsed, but they asked for no news; they simply waited until they heard of the end. Sometimes one of them would be called into the sick room, where he would stand by the bed looking in astonishment at the lifeless furniture and at the little man who was whiter than the sheets, who could scarcely open his eyes and could not speak. Then the old man and M. Julien would look at one another, and they would want to cry, and the nurse would say, "M. Julien must not be tired." And the old man would go down to the sitting room, and shake his head sadly, then the twenty-two old people shook their heads, like an assembly of Chinese figures with wagging heads. It was their way of showing their grief.

On the evening when M. Julien seemed to be nearing the end, it was raining, and the old people went one after another to look out of the window at the terrace. It was like a black swamp and the caretaker who was bringing the evening letters, sank ankle deep in the mud. The rain was falling in sheets that glistened like steel; it lashed against the window panes, the roof and the leaves of the trees with a dull, unceasing sound: the stone steps shone like ivory and there was a muddy yellow torrent streaming down the terrace, rolling stones and leaves in its course, and hollowing out the earth like a plow. In the

kitchen garden, the softened ground drank in the moisture like a sponge, and exhaled a sweet rich fragrance.

The servants were shutting all the windows in the house with great clatter, and the old people, imagining perhaps that they were on sea, and dreading shipwrecks, waited silently for the time to go to bed. The damp weather chilled them to the bone, and made them sneeze. That day, M. Niclot had gone to a printer to order bills for a public conference and debate on the practical application of the Law of Equal Balance to the sex problem. When he came back to the Refuge in the rain, he looked nearly drowned, and had to have warm linen and rum to bring him round. He demanded the attention of M. Julien's nurse, and thoroughly enjoyed displaying thus his authority before the steward, who seemed to be absorbing every one's attention and forgetting that he had a superior in the Refuge.

The terrace was like a pool, and still the rain was falling. It was night, but because M. Julien was fast growing weaker, the old people had refused to go to bed. They sat close together and drowsed or listened wistfully to the rain on the trees or front steps outside. Upstairs, M. Niclot was enjoying a warm bed and hot drink, but his throat was burning and he felt that he was going to have influenza. He looked forward to a few days' rest when he could play the tyrant to his heart's content. He blessed the storm which had given him a chill, and regretted that M. Julien thought himself ill: that was an annoying coincidence. M. Niclot instructed the nurse to tell M. Julien to see him as soon as he could walk.

The nurse protested, but she decided it would be futile to explain that M. Julien or any one else could be worse

than M. Niclot. There was a knock, and a servant announced that the priest had just left M. Julien, who seemed a little better.

"What priest?"

"From St. Mary's."

"Why that one?"

"Because it is the parish . . ."

"I'm asking you what that priest was doing here," M. Niclot cried, in spite of his sore throat.

"M. Julien wanted to take the Sacrament, and the Doctor said he would probably not live until morning."

M. Niclot did not believe it. He did not trust doctors.

"M. Julien wrote down that he would like to see you before he dies."

"Very well, very well, I'll go," said M. Niclot.

He lay still for a while, looking at the ceiling, and coughed, at the risk of irritating his throat. He tried to produce and exaggerate a feverish shiver, and to make his teeth chatter, for he did not realize that this phenomenon cannot be produced at will.

"This was a fine thing," he thought. "He the superintendent, had to get up from his bed at the command of the steward . . . and listen to his last words, whereas it should have been the steward who came to hear his commands. And why? Because he was going to die . . . to die! Do people die . . . ?

However, since the other man claimed that he was going to die, and asked for a last interview, M. Niclot said to the nurse:

"I'm going to get up to visit M. Julien."

He always preferred duty to pleasure, especially when there was some one to notice his virtue. He waited for

the nurse to protest that it was not a wise thing to do, but she said nothing.

He was obliged to say himself:

"I know that I ought to be careful in the state I am, but there are certain duties which may not be neglected."

He waited in vain for an answer and sighed feebly to show how ill and yet how noble he was. The nurse took a dressing gown and went towards the bed.

"No, no," said M. Niclot. "It's useless to try to restrain me; I know my duty. Even if I were worse, I should go to see M. Julien."

He sat up. The nurse left him and went to see M. Julien, who was trying to scribble some lines. He was supported by three pillows, but he could not hold a pencil. His hand was unsteady, he looked very feeble and there was a grayish hue on his face. The nurse and the servant helped him as far as they could, but they saw that his life was ebbing out. Still M. Niclot did not come. One of the old women came to the threshold, looked in and then vanished. She was crying although she scarcely knew why, except that all the old people had been crying since the priest had come to the Refuge.

M. Julien gave up trying to write, but he put the sheet of paper in an envelope, scribbled M. Niclot's name, and fell back in the pillows. In an instant he was dead.

The servant ran to M. Niclot's room and found him sitting on the bed, still undecided about going to M. Julien. She said:

"M. Julien has passed away."

"Has he? Good!" said the superintendent. And he jumped out of bed, saying:

"It's my duty to close his eyes."

When he went into the dead man's room, M. Niclot coughed and shivered. The women had already covered the face of the dead man.

"I insist on coming, myself," said M. Niclot. "Don't worry about me. My health is a matter of little importance at a time like this."

He stretched out his hand towards the sheet with a slow, hesitating movement, for he hoped that some one would restrain him.

"No, no," he insisted, "I must see him a last time."

And as no one stopped him, he was obliged to look at the tranquil face, that was relaxed and sweet. He put his hands in position to close the dead man's eyes, but it was useless, for the feel of the soft skin sent a shiver through him to his heels, he felt his hair stand on end, his face was cold and his pulse rapid. He covered the face again quickly, sneezed and went out of the room.

All the same, he was conscious of a kind of grief which had struck him when he touched the corpse. It arose, not from love, but from a kind of respect which has a place even in the hardest hearts, in the presence of death. He had never loved M. Julien and least of all that evening, but he scarcely dared to speak too harshly, for this man had only just died. However, he despised this shame and the next day he considered it as another of his grudges against M. Julien.

M. Niclot went to bed and shivered. When the nurse came into the room, he asked for quinine.

The servant had said:

"No, it's time to put the old folks to bed."

She went downstairs and said to them:

"M. Julien is dead."

They did not answer, but they understood, and the women made the sign of the cross. They shook their heads, or raised their hands, to show how powerless they were; they began to cry, and their eyes were already swollen and red with crying. Then, as silent as ghosts, they went slowly to bed, filling the corridors with the tapping of their sticks, and exchanging no word as they went into their rooms. Some of them mistook their rooms, because their eyes were dim when they thought of the dead man.

That night, the Refuge enclosed twenty-three old people, M. Niclot who was awake and M. Julien who was dead.

The second day after the death of M. Julien, M. Niclot was still in bed, feverish and exhausted. He had a cough. He told the doctor, who ordered rest and warmth, that he would have to attend the steward's funeral on the next day.

The doctor protested.

"I shouldn't advise it."

"Doctor," said M. Niclot, "you know as well as I do that there are certain duties to which all personal interests must be sacrificed. I shall attend the funeral to-day, even if it be the cause of my death."

"Oh!" said the doctor, with a smile, "I didn't think . . ."

"I repeat," insisted M. Niclot, "that I do not feel well enough to go to the funeral, but I know that I must not neglect my duty."

"I advise you simply to put enough on, and to go back to bed when you come back," said the doctor.

"I hope," said M. Niclot with a sigh, "that this im-

prudence (he emphasized the word), "that this imprudence will not prove fatal. But duty is duty."

The doctor went out, still smiling.

M. Niclot's grudges against the steward increased after the latter's death. He wanted to tell every one that the steward was dead, but that he was very ill himself.

He remembered all the occasions when they had come into conflict either as superintendent and steward or as Julien and Niclot, as officials or as men. He had always scorned the old man's gentle kindness, which made others love him: to-day he saw the climax of this audacious virtue on the quiet and lamented death of M. Julien, and he felt that he had been robbed. Jealous glances were cast towards him, as if every one resented seeing him there instead of the other, and he seemed to hear people saying, "You're glad, aren't you? Glad he's dead? Don't you see that you've killed him with your harshness and your hatred? You're glad . . . you're glad he is dead."

These unmuttered reproaches were unbearable. It may have been that M. Niclot rejoiced in M. Julien's death, but he did not want any one to see it. The superintendent was the soul of bureaucracy and saw everything in the light of an official. It was not because he loved M. Julien that he made an effort to go to the funeral, but because he felt that he would have been condemned if he had not gone. He had a vague feeling that he would distress the old people by his presence, and that his presence would be more irksome than his absence incorrect. That was sufficient to convince him that he ought to go, for he was one of the people who love to fulfill their duty to spite some one.

The next day he was worse, and could scarcely get up,

so the nurse advised him to stay in bed, saying that his attendance would surely be excused. He took on a lofty air, and protested that he had his duty to do, he wondered why a conspiration seemed bent on preventing him from fulfilling his duty. He repeated several times over that, after all, he was the superintendent and that no one had the right to give orders to him.

The twenty-three old people waited in the sitting room, until the undertaker's men came. They were allowed to attend the funeral, for the storm had passed, the weather was mild and none of them were ill.

They had only to put on their best clothes to be dressed in mourning; their pale faces seemed even paler against their black clothes. They walked on slowly and talked in jerky sentences, discussing the various funerals they had attended, as though they wanted to allow a unique position to M. Julien in this long series of dead men whom they had known. Maybe they were sad, but they had no words to express their grief, and they spoke of themselves rather than of the dead man. Their gestures were less limp than usual, and their speech less slow, for they were cheered by the prospect of an unexpected walk with their friend. Moreover, they were dressed in their best clothes, and this gave them a certain dignity, although they were self-conscious about them. They were going to bear their friend's standard, as it were, in public, and they did not forget M. Julien because they owed him this opportunity.

When the black curtains were hung up, the old people became silent. They admired these funeral preparations as well as the coffin, the candles and the poor looking flowers that had been bought in their name. They were chilled, but they dared not speak nor look around. They

each pictured a similar ceremony, that would take place some years later, when there would be only twenty-two old people to attend. There were tears in their eyes as they thought.

M. Niclot appeared. He was wearing a long coat, black gloves and a black hat with a high crown. He stood very erect, his round face was pale and there was a cold expression in his eyes. As he passed the black curtains, he did not bow his head, but barely raised his hat, and coughed to show that he was running great risks. The old people's sorrow became more intense, and they began to wonder whether it was really pleasant to attend a funeral. They no longer felt that they were alone with their friend; there were others present who came between them, and separated them from him.

Two or three officials and two strange old men arrived. Then the clergyman came and the ceremony began. The coffin was borne quickly across the garden, for the path was so narrow.

The procession advances towards the church: first the officials, then the strangers and lastly the twenty-three old people, the men in front of the women, behind them the small household staff of the Refuge.

The twenty-three old people walked as well as they could, holding their sticks firmly, and fixing their eyes on the pavement. They avoided the glances of any outsiders, for they seemed to feel ashamed that they too were not being borne to their graves. Each felt borne down by the weight of their communal age; they accused one another of being too old, they felt that no one but M. Julien could have encouraged them at that time, and they were sorry that he was dead.

They were weary with walking, and they could not keep in line as they had done at first, and the men and the women walked together. One dropped his stick, another stopped suddenly to wipe his nose, and those who were following passed him painfully, so that he had to hobble along as well as he could, to try and get back into his place in the line. Passers-by watched the somber little procession behind the black hearse, children laughed, but women looked sad and men were silent.

Finally they reached a little church, where it was warm, and where they could rest, and feel the comfort of the dim lights, the heavy scent, and the music. The old people sat close together and they seemed to understand that they were a community, a public, for the priest addressed them as a whole. He told them that M. Julien was dead and they were alive; his words touched them. When they placed their coppers with unsteady fingers on the collection plate, they awoke to a sudden consciousness; they watched the ceremony and took part in it, exchanging meaning glances. They thought of M. Julien, and realized that since they were in the church, he was dead. They were sorry, but they began to conceive vague ideas of immortality, because they were alive and they were in the presence of a dead man.

After the service, they rose like one man, and set off towards the cemetery in even file, the women first and the men after. Each of them kept an eye on his neighbor to see that he did not get out of line, for their pace was almost rhythmical. They knew now that they were taking part in a great drama, and they were not afraid of looking at the passers-by, for they were like heroes or great men. The crowd in the street showed their respect for the mani-

fold life of the community by crossing themselves. The old people were more alive in the presence of a dead man, for they had inherited the life laid down by M. Julien, and it was a common inheritance, to be shared by the twenty-three. They were not being borne in the funeral hearse, because between them they drove Death away, kept him at arm's length, mastered him, they were the masters of Death. They believed that since Death had found a victim to-day, he would leave them in peace for a long time, and they pulled themselves together, breathing the open air of the streets, and tapping the pavement with their sticks.

A slight drizzle came on, so they raised their collars, or tightened their scarfs, but they did not get out of line. In front of them, M. Niclot pulled his hat down over his ears, and led the way automatically. He did not forget to cough from time to time.

Just before reaching the cemetery, M. Niclot went up to the head undertaker to ask him to make haste, so that the ceremony should not be too long.

"In this rain," he said, "I shall be sure of getting bronchitis."

The procession quickened its speed. M. Niclot doubled it and took long strides, and behind him the old people tried to hasten, hobbling, limping and panting, in a pathetic effort to keep in line. They had left the resounding pavement of the streets, and now they were making their way along a wet country road, with low houses and gardens along it. Sometimes one of them slipped, others coughed and sneezed; the weaker ones lost ground, and now that there was no one to watch them, they lost heart and got out of line, for they were very tired. They en-

vied the carriage in front of them, because it was drawn by a horse.

They climbed painfully up the winding road leading to the cemetery, after slipping because of the mud. The hearse went more quickly, and M. Niclot followed close behind, but the old people were walking slowly and falling out of line. Although they tried to help one another, and the servants led some by the arm, several had to give up the struggle and go back, despondent and mud-bespattered, to the Refuge. The more determined of them struggled up the slippery road, although they were ready to drop they would not yield but kept on climbing, with their eyes fixed on the muddy ground.

When the hearse arrived at the gate of the cemetery, it was followed only by M. Niclot and the outsiders. Before the grave M. Niclot said:

"Don't wait for the laggers; let us hurry on."

He was indeed trembling with fever.

He had been obliged to take off his hat as he went up to the grave, but he had put it back. The coffin was let down, and the priest recited some prayers. M. Niclot felt that the cold was penetrating to his very bones, his feet were deep in the mud, and he cursed M. Julien and every one else. He sighed with relief when the handful of earth was thrown down, but he was enraged to see one of the officials, who stood by the grave and began to make a speech to which M. Niclot had perforce to listen. It was short, but at the end of it M. Niclot made it clear that he considered it his duty to deliver a speech, and that nothing would prevent him from fulfilling his duty. It was M. Julien's last stroke, and the most unpardonable of all, in the eyes of M. Niclot.

The old people were arriving, weary and trembling. M. Niclot stood on purpose in a pool of water beside the open grave, he took off his hat, so as to get full benefit of the rain, and loosened his scarf, with the result that he felt the cold all the more. After demonstrating in this way that he was angry, he coughed and began:

"I have insisted on fulfilling this duty of following M. Julien on his last journey. After the speech you have just heard, you will excuse me if I add no more. The deceased would have been glad to have seen those whom I saw here to-day.

"There are certain conditions in which all must be sacrificed to duty: such has been my attendance here to-day. But I considered it my duty."

He turned towards the grave, and said, after a pause, as though he was seeking a better word:

"Farewell."

Then to the old people, who showed no signs of moving:

"It is over."

It is over. M. Niclot returns along the road towards the Refuge, with his teeth chattering, and his feet slipping in the mud, as he hastens along, cursing the dead man.

The rain had stopped when M. Niclot went up the Refuge garden. He went straight to bed, had hot drinks prepared, and sent for the doctor.

The old people were returning now, one by one, or in little groups, they crossed the garden blindly, so stupefied were they by the misery of their weariness. An hour later, the twenty-three were in bed, and gallons of water were boiling in the kitchen to fill bottles which might bring back a little warmth to these chilled bodies.

In all the rooms there was a damp smell peculiar to public swimming baths. The old people were slowly getting warm, but they were still tired out, and they had not recovered from the misery of walking through mud and rain. They could think of nothing but their struggle uphill towards the cemetery, and the very memory made their teeth chatter, as they clasped imaginary sticks more firmly in their hands, and watched before them the hearse they had followed so miserably. Their last impression of M. Julien was that he had caused them to bear an undeserved cross, in a cruel storm, and gradually an involuntary grudge came to be felt against the dead man who was responsible for this disastrous upheaval. The grudge originated in the superintendent's room and spread little by little, until all the old people felt it, even though they were unconscious of harboring any such resentment. They knew that they had been momentarily elated, only to sink more deeply afterwards into their wretched state of weakness, cold and weariness. M. Julien vanished, as if the old people had suddenly tired of following the hearse, and had left it to go where it would. M. Julien was among the dead men; for his resurrection during the Church service had been all too short.

M. Julien had not had the grace to leave peace behind him, after his death; on the contrary, there was upheaval and disturbance, not only in the domestic organization of the Refuge, but also in the weakened physique of M. Niclot, who had suffered so severely from the rain and the cold. M. Niclot had not even the consolation of suffering as a martyr to duty, because there was no one to appreciate his heroic self-sacrifice. He was left alone while his illness dragged on, for the Refuge was taken up with other

cares and sorrows, so that no one cared very much about the sickness of M. Niclot. He was all the more annoyed because the old people recovered after two days' warmth, so well that scarcely any of them had colds, for in the wornout bodies of the aged there exist some mysterious resources of strength, which prolong still further their long lives and bear out M. Niclot's theory. In one of those barren mountain regions where the inhabitants have inherited from their forefathers a simple kind of intimacy with Heaven, a proverb says that God comes down from Heaven to kill one old woman. So in spite of the elements, God could not take the life of one of the twenty-three old people, maybe their old friend, too, was interceding on their behalf, but they thought of him so rarely that they soon forgot him.

Obviously, there was no one to intercede on behalf of M. Niclot. M. Julien had been kindly during his life, but doubtless death had made him cruel, since he would be sharing the life of an infallible world, where the idea of pardon would be unknown. M. Niclot paid the price of his sin, and his devotion to his duty did not prevent his influenza from developing into pneumonia. From time to time, he would say, "This is what a man pays for doing his duty. Just what that fellow Julien would like to do, make me suffer after his death." And to those who visited him, the doctor, and even the inmates of the Refuge, he explained, time after time, that he had gone to the funeral to appease his conscience, and that he was only paying the price of his incomparable zeal. When he was talking in this way, his eyes glittered with such anger that his expression was hideous, and no one could pity him, in spite of his illness. He was one of those people

who complain because no one sympathizes with them, without ever giving any sympathy to any one. The best way of securing the sympathy of others is to give some first. It is always better to offer a hand in friendship than a mailed fist.

Peevish and dry, M. Niclot died, without bidding farewell to any one.

The twenty-three old people learned of his death without surprise and without grief. They realized that it was not their turn, and they were glad. In the Refuge, there was no more than the silence and restraint imposed by the presence of an unlamented corpse; it was like the stillness after an outbreak of anger on the part of M. Niclot when every one was afraid of speaking aloud lest it should irritate him.

He left a brief will, which included among other directions, the following:

"I wish that all the inmates of the Refuge should attend my funeral, as they did M. Julien's, and as I myself did on that occasion . . ." But the twenty-three old people shook their heads and, remembering the rain, the cold and their weariness, they said they would prefer not to go; and it was considered wise not to urge them.

Some officials and a few outsiders attended M. Niclot's funeral. Two men and two women had been chosen from the inmates to attend the funeral, and they were well wrapped up in shawls and were given coffee and a glass of rum to fortify them against the cold.

The old people stood in the courtyard watching the preparations for the funeral: there were black hangings over the door, adorned with a silver N, and as before, the bearers could scarcely help running along the narrow gar-

den path, because of the size and weight of the coffin. When the hearse set off, the old people watched with interest the men who were taking down the hangings, and they even helped them to roll them up and take out the nails. There was no great grief over M. Niclot's death.

On the next day, the nurse, cook and servants took charge of the organization of the house, until a new steward and superintendent were appointed, and the old people were at first stupefied by the fact that no one was in authority over them. They wandered about like lost souls. Their friend was dead, and their enemy was dead. They had neither a protector nor a master, and they clung together lest they should fall. There was a wistful expression in their eyes for they were frightened by the prospect of a new life, which they could scarcely fathom. It might be a trap, a snare. They were fast losing faith in the immortality of their bodies, for time was assailing them. Time would pass them by. Death had struck down their masters, and now he was prowling around to look for the vulnerable point, so the old people clung together as though they were out on a dark night, and were afraid of being separated. Several of them asked that two beds should be put in each room, so that they should not be left alone. Each one hoped that another would die before him, and the Refuge became as silent as a convent or a graveyard. Even the servants respected this silence as though they were living with phantoms.

One day, it was announced that two men had been appointed to take the places of M. Niclot and M. Julien, and the people were standing on the edge of the terrace, leaning on the little wall to watch for the arrival of the steward and the superintendent who were not dead men.

The little bell rang, and the two men appeared. The twenty-three bent old people shuddered, for the two men were not old.

It was then that the old people realized they were left alone and without a defense; the dead sentinels had been replaced. They gave up the effort of defending themselves against attack, and when the new superintendent came to speak a few kindly words to them, they bent before him as though he were reading out their death warrant.

That evening they went to bed saddened by the burden of unshed tears. The next day, as they sat close together, they thought of the time when old men had protected them against Death. One of them found expression for the thought that was in the minds of all.

"Ah, if M. Julien had not died!" he said.

"But M. Julien is dead," said another.

"Yes," the first one answered, "but there was still M. Niclot."

"M. Niclot was a great man," said an old woman.

"He would not have died," a voice said, "if it had not been for that accursed funeral."

And the twenty-three old people, feeling that Death was approaching, took vengeance on the one who had first given way to the enemy, and they thought:

"All our misery is through M. Julien."

JEALOUSIES

Frederic Boutet

In her little salon overlooking the sun-bathed Parc Monceau, Geneviève Allorge sat writing a few letters before going out, when the bell rang.

"Madame Halouin," announced the maid.

Geneviève rose to greet a smartly dressed young woman who entered swiftly.

"How are you, Diane," she said, "I am glad to see you. I was not expecting you this afternoon."

The visitor, who was small, slight and fair, had only her grace in common with the stately goddess whose name she bore. It would have better suited the classic beauty of Geneviève. The two young women kissed. They were old school friends and had married at about the same time, Diane for love, Geneviève without it, and now that the latter, divorced two years earlier, lived alone, she saw a good deal of the Halouins.

"I hope I am not disturbing you," said Diane, after a quick glance at the letters on the writing table. "I have something to tell you, Geneviève."

She spoke nervously, with suppressed agitation, her cheeks glowed through her very slight make-up and her beautiful eyes shone brightly.

"You know quite well that you never disturb me, my little Diane, but what is the matter? You look quite worried," said Geneviève, observing her friend.

"Geneviève, can any one hear us? I have something

terrible to tell you. I need your advice. I am so unhappy. You are my friend, my best friend, my only friend, Geneviève."

"But what is the matter? You frighten me . . ."

"Geneviève, Geneviève, Georges does not love me any more! He is deceiving me!"

Geneviève started.

"Your husband is deceiving you? He does not love you any more? Come, come, Diane."

"I know what I am saying! Georges is deceiving me, I know it!"

She paused, she was not crying but sat with heaving breast and clasped hands. She stared at her friend, her eyes dilated with emotion.

"Come, Diane, I am sure your suspicions are groundless. Your husband is . . ."

"He does not love me any more. He loves another woman! I began to suspect it nearly a year ago, and now I am absolutely positive. I have proofs!"

"You have proofs? What proofs?"

"You shall have them! I will tell you everything! I will even tell you the name of the woman!" said Diane violently.

Geneviève remained silent.

"Geneviève," continued Diane in a jerky voice, "when I came here, I had not decided to tell you the depth of my distress, it is so humiliating! I meant only to tell you about Georges' present liaison; but you had better know everything, so as to be able to advise me. I know I can trust you absolutely, Geneviève. I know I can depend upon your discretion. You will promise to keep the secret, won't you?"

"Of course, dear, go on."

"Listen. My husband has always deceived me. We have been married for six years; well, for six years he has been deceiving me! If you only knew what I have suffered! He had women friends when we were engaged, and has had them ever since. Women of all classes . . . women of our own world; women he met at dance halls, and women he picked up in the street. Commonplace affairs without even love as an excuse, lasting a few days, a few weeks, following one another, overlapping even. Georges has confessed everything to me. He cannot see a woman without desiring her, without wanting to force her to yield to him. Stranger forms of the collector's mania have been known!"

She laughed harshly, and touched her dry eyes with her handkerchief.

"I am horrified," said Geneviève slowly. She had remained seated opposite Diane, and listened motionless, with downcast eyes. "I am horrified by what you tell me—Georges Halouin, of all people! He, who seems so sincere, so upright, so reserved, so far-removed from these . . . these degrading affairs. So he—he could be like that."

"He is deeper than he looks. Yes, he appears serious and reserved, possessing a certain delicacy of feeling. I know, I know, but it is all a game. In reality! Ah! You can imagine what my life has been, with him. I have been patient, for I loved him; I thought he would end by tiring of these vulgar pleasures. I thought he would change, that in the end he would come back to me. I tried to make myself believe that these whims of his were without importance, that in spite of all he might still

love me. But now, I am more unhappy than ever, for he has only one passion, a serious one, which has lasted for several months already, and which is absorbing him more and more. And do you know for whom, Geneviève? With Lily Bergery, the dancer in the 'Blue Paradise'! He loves her, I know. She knows how to hold him, all right! He is neglecting me more and more. Before, at least, he was careful to keep up appearances; he often stayed at home in the evening, when we did not go out together. Now, at least, three times a week, he goes off alone, and only comes back late at night. I know he is not at his club. I know he is with that woman . . ."

"But how did you learn all this?"

"A month ago I was at the theater when that woman passed near my box, and I heard one of the spectators say to a friend: 'Yes, that is Lily Bergery; she is with Georges Halouin, at present.' I suspected it before, but that confirmed my suspicions. And last night, Geneviève, he never came home at all! He has never done that before; he only came back this morning. He pretended that he had spent the night gambling. That is a lie, for he never plays. We had a terrible row. I am afraid he will leave me for that woman. I am mad with grief. Tell me! What can I do?"

Geneviève did not answer at once. Her eyes were still downcast, and she seemed lost in thought.

"I don't know what to say, dear," she murmured at last, "I am so shocked by what you tell me! I have never been so mistaken in any one as in your husband. I should never have believed it of him! Even now, after your assertions, which I cannot doubt, it is difficult for me to believe it. I am very sorry for you, my little Diane,

and I admire your courage, and the way in which you have borne all this for so long . . ."

"Ah! you are sorry for me, are you not? You would never have believed it, would you? Oh! the miserable creature . . ."

Diane, who had uttered these words explosively, in a fit of anger, stopped suddenly, and became a little calmer.

"I am going," she went on, her voice still trembling with emotion. "I am going, it is late. I hope you are not vexed with me for keeping you from going out. You are not, are you, Geneviève? Good-by, I am going home. My husband was expecting some one on business, he will be there. I will go to him. If I have it out with him, I shall let you know all about it, you may be sure! Good-by, darling Geneviève, I shall be seeing you soon."

Diane went out hurriedly, and Geneviève sat down at the table where her letters still lay unfinished, but she did not continue writing. She put her elbows on the desk, and remained motionless, resting her head on her hands, deep in thought.

On leaving her friend's house, Diane hailed a taxi and drove home.

"Is Monsieur at home?" she asked the maid.

"Yes, Madame, Monsieur is in his study with a gentleman."

"Very well, thank you."

Diane went to her room, took off her hat and coat and sat down with a book. She did not read, but sat waiting, frowning angrily.

The clock struck seven. Diane heard a step in the next room, and lay down on the sofa whilst a smile took the place of the angry frown.

The door opened and a tall, dark young man entered. He had fine, regular features and grave eyes.

"Hello, old girl," he said playfully to Diane, "you are back early. That chatterbox of a Lefeutrier kept me busy all this time, and has only just gone. What are you reading?"

" 'Broken Hearts,' by Palmer," she answered. "It is a bore. Oh! By the way! I simply must tell you. Do you know what I heard to-day?"

"Some new scandal, I expect."

"Well, it is hardly a scandal," she paused, and then cried suddenly, "Geneviève Allorge is marrying again!"

Georges started violently.

"What was that you said?" he stammered.

"I said that Geneviève Allorge was marrying again," said Diane, with a sweet smile.

"Marrying again? Who on earth is Geneviève marrying again? Come."

Georges was so taken aback that he could do nothing but stammer.

"Pull yourself together," said Diane carelessly. "There is nothing extraordinary in that. She is a widow, she is free, very free even, and she is marrying Alfred Vrani-Lebourg."

"She, Geneviève, is marrying that man! But it is impossible! And I . . . and no one knew anything about it!"

"Yes, I did. We are great friends, and have no secrets from each other. She had made me promise not to tell any one, not even you. Then to-day, after you had gone, she telephoned and asked me to come round and see her.

Then she told me it had all been settled last night, and that I might spread the news."

"But I thought she hardly knew the man."

"Far better than you think."

Georges walked up and down the room, trying to regain his composure.

"I cannot believe it, it is impossible," he kept on repeating, "she cannot be marrying that fop Vrani-Lebourg . . . he is a fool, a snob, whose only asset is a large fortune."

"Well, that counts for something, does it not?"

"Oh! surely not with a woman like Geneviève. Besides, she is well off!"

"She says so, but as a matter of fact, Allorge did not leave her much of a fortune. It is true that he earned a great deal of money, but he had no fortune to speak of. So Geneviève has had to live by her wits."

"What do you mean, 'live by her wits'?"

"I mean what I say. You men really are so credulous. Just because a woman pretends to be more interested in intellectual subjects than in everyday occurrences, you take it all in, and put her on a pedestal, as the most virtuous of women. You may be sure Geneviève is like the rest of them! She has got to live somehow or other, has she not? So you think she hardly knows Vrani-Lebourg, do you? You make me laugh! As a matter of fact, all it means is that her efforts to make him marry her have at last succeeded. Don't you realize that he is a dear friend of hers and has been helping her for the last eighteen months?"

Georges Halouin took a threatening step towards his wife.

"Stop it, Diane!" he cried, "you have no right to say such things! How can you make such unjust attacks on Geneviève, who is a perfectly honorable woman. She is our friend, your best friend! I forbid you to say another thing about her!"

"And I forbid you to deceive me with her!"

Diane had risen. She spoke the words violently, standing threateningly before her husband.

"What did you say?" stammered Georges.

"I saw she has loved you for over a year. I suspected it from a thousand little things . . . your admiration for her, when she is with you, your literary and artistic conversations. I never said a thing, hoping for something more definite. And now, I am positive! I made her confess everything, just as I have done with you! This afternoon I went to see her, and pretended to confide in her. First of all I told her you were deceiving me, and that I knew with whom. I was watching her the whole time; I saw how frightened she was. She still thought I knew. Then I pretended to decide to tell her everything, and told her you had been deceiving me ever since we were engaged . . . with all sorts of women . . . and that at present you were the lover of a music-hall dancer, with whom you were spending most of your nights . . ."

"You said that . . . of me?"

"Yes, I did," sneered Diane, defiantly, "I took good care that she should not discover that I was lying. I never mentioned afternoons, only evenings, when we stay at home. I know you are at home, but she does not! If you had only seen her, trembling with suppressed jealousy! If you had only heard her say in disgust: "He . . . he has done that! . . . Yes, she certainly has confessed!

And now, you also have confessed . . . your astonishment, your grief, your rage, when I invented that story about her marrying again, prove it only too clearly! The two experiments are quite conclusive, you see!"

She stopped, choking with her own vehemence. Her husband, his anger now quite gone, stood staring at her, as if she had been a scorpion.

"You have done that," he managed to say at last, "on the strength of your stupid, inexcusable suspicions, you are capable of resorting to such base machinations, such disgusting lies, such calumnies, such low-down trickery."

"Well, what about you? You are capable of deceiving me," she cried, "and she is my best friend!"

He did not trouble to answer, but shrugged his shoulders and went out. He wanted to be out in the open, to pull himself together and, above all, to think.

. . . . . .

He wandered through the streets, crowded with people hurrying home for dinner, without noticing where he went, trying to realize clearly what had befallen him.

Suddenly, he noticed that he was in front of the house where Geneviève Allorge lived.

Without pausing to think of the lateness of the hour, he went up and rang the bell.

Geneviève was at home, as, somehow, he had felt she would be. She received him at once.

"I am sorry to come so late," he said, without daring to look at her. "I must speak to you."

"Has anything happened to Diane?" asked Geneviève, coldly. "She came to see me this afternoon, and appeared very nervous. Your visit alarms me . . ."

"I know she was here."

"She was very unhappy and upset," Geneviève went on. "She confided things to me which shocked and pained me deeply. I thought you two got on so well together. What she told me has grieved me, for both your sakes. I have no right to blame you, but how could you . . ."

"But it is not true!" Georges moved appealingly toward Geneviève. "It is not true! She lied! It is all untrue, from beginning to end . . . everything she told you! I have not sunk to such depths. I have never deceived her, or been guilty of such disgraceful conduct. It is not true!"

Geneviève hastily suppressed an exclamation of joy.

"Oh!" she said in a low voice, "I knew it could not be true."

"You knew it?"

"Yes. I felt I could not possibly have been mistaken in you to such an extent. Diane is hasty and impulsive, but she really loves you. She must have been misled . . ."

"No!" interrupted Georges, "she lied wittingly! She told you all those lies about me purposely. Just as she afterwards told me lies about you!"

"She told you lies about me? What did she say about me?"

"Never mind what she said. I did not believe her, except, perhaps, in the first minute, before I got over my astonishment."

"But why has she done all this?"

Georges hesitated a moment.

"Because she was jealous," he said at length, "she thought she was setting us a clever trap, first of all for you, and then for me, to force us to confess . . ."

"To confess what?"

Georges did not answer.

"Oh!" cried Geneviève, coloring warmly, "she suspected us of that . . . that is why . . ."

"Yes, that is why she wanted to make us jealous, so that we should give ourselves away! As far as I am concerned, she succeeded. When she told me of your proposed marriage, I realized that I was jealous of you. I realized what I had already felt in the inmost depths of my heart, without admitting it to myself. I realized that I love you! Oh! I can tell you so now, after the way she has behaved, know that, with her lies, she has freed me. Geneviève, I cannot bear the idea of not seeing you! She wanted to separate us, to make it impossible for us ever to meet. Geneviève, do you really want me to leave you forever?"

She raised her eyes, lowered until now, looked him straight in the face, and answered:

"No."

She looked away and added:

"I, too, have suffered much, since that dreadful conversation! I, too, have been jealous! I, too, realized that I loved you, through her, through your wife? Ah! poor Diane, what has she done! What has she done!"

Silence reigned for a moment. Each felt, without saying so, that Diane, wrong though she might have been, had also been right in a way, guessing their secret before they themselves knew it.

PICOLO

Gaston Cherau

To my friend, Georges Jeanniot:

You will always see hollyhocks, high as distaffs, growing in front of the house by the roadside. Those growing just under the window have their heads cut off, but others keep clear of the shutters, and together with the great clusters of hyacinths, they surround the pretty house of Mlle. Fonturigues.

The garden is the same year after year, with the hollyhocks growing between the paving stones and the walls of the house, and the hyacinths that Mlle. Fonturigues sets each year as soon as the cold weather is over. There are so many of these flowers on the island that it might have been their native home, but old people remember a time when there were none, until the Fonturigues family set the first. The seeds were brought from the Americas by a certain cabin-boy, the hapless Picolo who had voyaged far and wide, for he had been round the world twenty times, but he had never made his fortune in his wanderings, and eventually he came home to spend the rest of his days on the isle. He would not believe that he was settled in his last home, and he still cherished hopes of starting off again. He was too old for service on the vessels that make up their crews at La Rochelle and Bordeaux, and he would not realize that long distance voyages in schooners and three-masters are out of date, and that

he, too, would have to submit to the march of progress, bringing its mechanical devices that have been the ruin of sailing ships. And Picolo was old; he suffered from the ailments of the aged, and also from another thing: on his return from Martinique the last time, he had broken his leg, and his recovery had not been as absolute as the doctor had promised. However, he had roughed it for forty-five years when the accident happened.

For these reasons, no ship owners were disposed to take him on. In an emergency, he might have been useful with the cargoes where the man need not be necessarily very agile, but Antoine Berditon, otherwise Picolo, was not a man to be trampled under foot and used as a last resource. He had endured much in his day; he had eaten the most unspeakable concoctions of barbarians, as well as seals and sharks, dry fish and oily fish in time of famine; he had slept in the filthiest and most plague-stricken places seen by man; but he preserved, in spite of all, a fastidiousness which recoiled from the smell of smoke, and the throb of engines and the creaking of machinery on sea-going vessels. To his mind, a ship was a great silent bird with clean and supple wings, called stay-sails or foresails, topsails or top gallant masts, mizzen tops or mizzen top gallant masts.

When he caught sight of one, he followed it with his sky glass until it banished from sight in the straits of La Rochelle, or beyond the horizon, towards La Gironde, and the sight of it set him dreaming for many days.

"Poor as Picolo," was a common saying in the part of the island to which he had returned, because it had seemed such a Paradise to him, when he was away on long voyages! It was his birthplace; it was there he had begun

fishing, it was there that the sea had bewitched him long, long ago, seventy years ago. When he came home to have his leg patched up, he was like all those who have wandered far afield, he expected to be welcomed home like a benefactor, bringing tales of strange lands and queer-looking weapons and—illusions. Old people said in astonishment when they saw him:

"Bless my soul, if it isn't Antoine Berditon." And for a while they enjoyed listening to his stories.

When he was at home, he was always to be seen shuffling along from the little seaport to the salt marsh or to the rocks, where there was no one to take notice of him. He always kept his place at "The Marine," but he was no one of importance there; he was simply the last comer among the drinkers.

When he bought a hovel near the refinery with his last bit of money and a yawl that was on sale, the village was interested in the transaction. They thought he was going to fish, and as there is plenty in the sea for every one, no one was jealous. Then Berditon was to be seen mending his nets, coiling his cordage, caulking his boat, and lifting lobsters into it; and very often Berditon was to be seen drinking at "The Marine." It was at this time that he was nicknamed Picolo, and it was about this time that he became wretchedly poor, and began to live like an animal.

The main purpose of his existence henceforward was to escape the notice of the villagers. They had an idea that he did his own cooking, but they never saw smoke from his chimney. The year he returned, he took quite a pride in his appearance; he wore clean linen, shaved himself and had his hair cut regularly. When he went

out, he carried a stick with a queer carved top, but before long he grew neglected looking and the stick was put away in a corner.

Antoine Berditon had long since passed the zenith of his life, and he was now well on the downward slope. This was a truth of which he himself had no suspicion, and he would never have believed it if any one had told him. His illusions were still schemes that he hoped to bring about, and he still cherished the hope of being taken on board the first sailing ship that arrived. He went twice to La Pallice, in the hope of having his name entered on the lists, but once the ship had only come in to be broken up, the other time the crew was complete.

It was written that Antoine Berditon should be no longer, and that only Picolo should survive.

He was very unhappy, for he was consumed by a secret grief, but the indifference of others did not distress him, nor did he care about the scorn in which his neighbors were beginning to hold him. He reveled in the recollection of his splendid voyages, and each day his wonderful past seemed more heroic, as his memory grew dimmer with the haze of many years.

Picolo was neither shrewd enough nor sensitive enough to perceive the futility of the travels which had led Berditon to the last and inglorious stage of his journey. The dangers and hardships over which he had triumphed satisfied his thirst for glory just as the strange sights he had seen in foreign lands satisfied his longing for light and color and all that is bizarre. What he had seen and suffered placed him above his fellow villagers, in his own estimation at least, for he was the only one who knew of them.

But he suffered physically; his bad leg was quite paralyzed and he could scarcely move it; his arms were twisted with rheumatism and his fingers stiff and painful.

The last time he had gone out to sea to fish a violent squall had torn his sails and he had been cast ashore at Le Fier. The tide bore him gently back to safety on dry land, but his boat was a wreck. It would have cost a good deal of money to have her repaired and Picolo had not, at the moment, enough to buy a blanket for his bed.

He took the riggings of his boats and tried to cover up the worst holes in the floor of his hut.

From that time on, he only fished from the shore. The man who had traveled round the world was reduced to fishing for crabs and hermit crabs, for periwinkles and mussels.

For a week, he was conscious of his inglorious fall, but after that he lived in his memories of the past, without paying any attention to the present.

In the mornings or afternoons or at night, according to the tide, he was to be seen passing, barefooted, leaning on two sticks, with his stiff back bent under a big basket for shrimps, and he always carried a child's net to catch them, and a hook for tortoises. When he was in luck, he caught lobsters and conger eels.

He spoke to no one as he passed, and he did not even answer those who wished him good-day.

He was a victim to the inordinate pride of the poor which shuts itself up in a wall of reserve. Men did not whisper behind his back, because they knew the treacherous ways of the world, but women were not afraid of saying what they thought. There was one in particular,

the postman's daughter, Anita, who could not contain herself for anger when he passed—as though Picolo ever wanted to harm any one. He would not even have known her from the other women, if she had not been standing so often on the Fonturigues' doorstep, when he came back weary from fishing, with his muttered complaints about his misfortune. His pride helped him to bear his sorrows, and he had the consolation of believing himself the most unhappy creature on the island. He began to suspect that Anita talked about him.

He was not mistaken. One afternoon, she saw him passing in the rain, when she was helping Mlle. Fonturigues with the housework. She exclaimed:

"Look, mademoiselle, there's Picolo."

She invented lies about him, so as to flatter her employer, and Mlle. Fonturigues did not stop her until she said:

"He's living in filth without a roof over his head."

"Don't talk about things you know nothing about," answered Mlle. Fonturigues sharply. "His father was a good man, Anita."

And she went on deliberately, having mastered her anger with this impudent girl who so criticised one of the finest families in the isle.

"I knew them years ago, before your time."

Anita looked as though she were going to argue, so Mlle. Fonturigues reminded her of her place by telling her to wash the floor.

Her mistress went out, furious with herself for having defended Picolo, whom she always thought of as Antoine Berditon.

A few days after, she met him on her way home from

church, and as there was no one on the street, she said to him in a harsh voice:

"It seems things aren't going too well with you, Berditon."

He did not stop immediately, but after a pace or two he said:

"They're as they are."

Mlle. Fonturigues stood still, without speaking; she felt as if she had been told to mind her own business by some one who was her better. From that day, she cherished a secret hatred against this barefooted ne'er-do-well who had not lived up to his family traditions. She remembered they had played together as children, and had sat next one another at school, for she had admired him when she was a little girl. He used to tell stories of the sea and sailors, and he used to go with the sardine fishers, and then one day he disappeared with a tunny fisher on the coasts of Spain. What an adventure! If he came back without a farthing he brought wonderful tales of great adventures.

But as she grew up, she heard people's talk about him, and gradually her reason and calm won the day over the splendid tales of Antoine Berdition. Seamen have always to face the severe judgment of landsmen.

Now she understood that his existence was not a very fine one and she felt ashamed that she had ever been Picolo's playmate.

One day she saw him in a new turnout. He had found an old push-car with one wheel missing and he had made the thing go by attaching the remnants of an old bicycle wheel.

This helped him very much. His baskets, nets and

hooks were no longer a burden on his shoulders, and the journey from the village to the rocks was no longer a source of misery and anguish. When once he reached the shore, he fixed his carriage under the tamarisk and, armed with two sticks, made his way across the seaweed until he reached the water. It was a dangerous expedition, because in his state, the slightest error of judgment might have been fatal; and there was good reason to fear that one day the incoming tide would find him unable to move, and all that remained of him would be offered to the crabs.

It was a pity to see him doing his daily journeys like this.

. . . . . .

One stormy morning when he was passing Mlle. Fonturigues' house, the ladder, which was fixed against the wall that was being painted, swayed and the unlucky Picolo was not nimble enough to get out of the way. The ladder fell right on his carriage and Picolo was in the midst of the disaster.

When Mlle. Fonturigues picked him up, she thought he was dead. He however was not at all hurt, but his carriage was irretrievably damaged.

He looked at the wreck for a long time, as though he could not realize the disaster. Then he shook his head, as he thought of the days to come without the companion that was the prop and mainstay of his life. He was silent, but his determined confidence had received a sad blow and his pride too, although it was not the first.

Mlle. Fonturigues, who had placed the ladder against her wall, came out and picked up the nets and hooks, then she put the two sticks in the hands of the hapless crea-

ture, and ordered him in an imperious tone to go into the house.

Picolo bent down to collect the ruins of his carriage, but the wind made him dizzy, and he swayed like a tree whose roots are dead, and he would have fallen, had it not been for Mlle. Fonturigues.

"Now, go in, Antoine," she said peremptorily.

She held him firmly under the arm, and pushed him towards the house, but she had scarcely let him go when he turned back, with his arms stretched out towards his carriage.

"Stay here, Antoine," she said, a little more gently.

She had no idea before that an act of kindness brought such delightful sensations. She felt a different woman, stronger and more alive. Her face was transfigured, when she went into the house, after clearing from the street the remains of Picolo's carriage, and she would never have thought herself capable of being so helpful.

Just as she shut the door, she heard voices, carried by the wind, and looking behind the window curtain, she saw Anita and a woman who sold sandals.

She quietly bolted the door, and taking Picolo by the arm, drew him into the kitchen. She made him sit down, and cleared away the broken wheels of the wreck, for she had thrown them on to the kitchen floor; then she waited for Anita to knock. She saw her pick up something as she was talking to the other woman. They were both struggling against the gale that drove them back, but did not separate them. Mlle. Fonturigues was in a fury. She could contain herself no longer, so she opened the window and called out:

"Do you think I'm going to wait until to-morrow?"

Nevertheless, when Anita did arrive, Mlle. Fonturigues was hard put to it to know how to get rid of her.

"You're going . . . " she said.

"Look, here's an old knife. I just found it in front of the house."

Mlle. Fonturigues took it from her, and put it on the round table.

"Go to Marie-la-sole's," she went on, "and buy a pound of beans."

"I'll go when I've done the work."

"Go now, and when you're passing the baker's, get the bread and a pound of flour." Her tone was such that Anita answered crossly:

"Marie-la-sole won't be up. It's only seven o'clock."

"Wait until she opens, then."

Just when she was about to go out, overwhelmed by such treatment, Anita reflected for a moment, and ventured to say:

"I'll take the basket for them."

"You're not to take the basket. Put them in your apron."

And so that she would not need to go into the kitchen, Mlle. Fonturigues opened the front door, and said to her:

"When you come back, put the beans in water and light the fire."

She gave the key a turn, stopped to think for a moment, then said to her guest:

"Now, go out into the shed, I'll bring you your belongings."

He knew the way about the garden as well as though he had been there the day before. It was all familiar to him; the path with rose trees along it, the one with pear

trees; the two dwarf peach trees, and the well with the bucket in the same place as it had been in his childhood. He went to the right, past the old bakehouse and the outhouse, and he recognized the wheel-barrow, and in a corner of the shed, he saw the old wader, that M. Fonturigues had used in winter to catch water-fowl on the salt marshes. He stopped and looked up: there in a hole in the ceiling, were the two thick cords he had put there himself one Thursday in the year when he took his first communion. Félicité had asked him for a swing, and he had fixed one up, but there had been an accident, and M. Fonturigues had forbidden its use.

He remembered it all as though sixty years were but a day, and it was so clear that his memory could not deceive him. He was a child again of nine or ten years of age; his life was before him, soon he would hear M. Fonturigues call out to him.

"Is that you, Antoine? . . . Haven't you been to school this morning?"

He went into the shed, and sat down on a sack that held the ashes used for boiling the linen, and also for scattering round the strawberry plants in May, to keep slugs and snails away.

Mlle. Fonturigues came running up to him.

"Look," she said, "here are the remnants of your carriage. Put them in a corner where no one will see them. I'll give you another."

It was like one of their games in the old days.

"Don't go away from here," she went on.

"I'll call you when dinner's ready."

"Thank you, mademoiselle," he muttered politely.

She was furious and she broke out, saying:

"Mademoiselle, indeed? . . . can't you call me Apolline, and have done with it?"

He looked at her, and said weakly, yielding as he always did:

"Thanks, Apolline."

Thus began again dealings between Antoine Berditon and Mlle. Apolline Fonturigues.

That morning Anita had so much to do in the house that she had no time to go ferreting in the garden, and when she was tying on her scarf to go home to dinner, her mistress told her what she was to do the next day, implying that her services would not be needed that afternoon.

"But there are still clothes to wash," Anita ventured to say.

"You can wash them to-morrow."

What could she answer when she was spoken to like this? She went home.

Without delay Mlle. Fonturigues laid the table in the kitchen for dinner, and then went to Antoine, who was still sitting on the sack of ashes. She found him trying to mend the rents in his trousers with a bit of string.

"I don't think you'll manage it like that," she said, laughing at him. "I'll give you a needle and thread."

Antoine shook his head.

"It won't hold like this."

"Ah, it won't hold together, and haven't you another pair?"

She shrugged her shoulders peevishly and told him to come and have dinner.

He had not eaten meat for a long time, and having got

out of the habit, he thought he would have preferred eels or crabs or periwinkles. Anyhow, he enjoyed drinking a drop of wine.

When he had had enough, Mlle. Fonturigues told him to wait until she came back. She went up to the loft, and rummaged there for a while, until she found the carriage they had played with as children. Antoine recognized it when she brought it down; it had two good wooden wheels, and two upright shafts held in place by fixtures of boxwood.

"Ah," he exclaimed in delight, "it's still in existence! That's what I used to push you round the garden in."

These recollections were rather a blow to Apolline, but she swept them aside, saying:

"You can have it, and then you can go on with your work—or go along somehow. Here you are, here's a blanket for you. It's not too warm in your shanty, is it? Poor begger!"

He did not bend his head, or show any sign of being ashamed of his poverty; he had scarcely realized how wretched was his plight. He knew one thing well enough: that he suffered tortures with rheumatism, and this blanket was just the cure he needed.

"Now," said Apolline, "take whatever belongs to you, and go out by the garden gate, because I don't want people to know you've been here."

Then she asked:

"Are there holes in your pockets?"

"Yes," he answered, "but there's one good one."

Apolline shrugged her shoulders again. "Well," she said maliciously, "put this in it." It was a five-franc note.

"To-morrow, when you come back from fishing, go round by the lane, and through the garden gate. I want to see you. What time will it be?"

He calculated the time when the tide would be in.

"Very well," said Apolline, "you'll not be here before six o'clock."

She had already lifted the carriage over the doorstep. Antoine Berditon put his two sticks down on it, and leaning his weight on the uprights, pushed himself towards the shed.

He felt under his palms the wood that he had held as a child, and it seemed soft and warm to him. He found the carriage was just the right size, and he revelled in it. It was white with the dust of sixty years but in the chinks there were the little glass pearls belonging to a necklace whose thread had been broken. Antoine remembered the necklace very well, it was pink and blue, and Apolline's uncle had brought it from La Rochelle.

What a wonderful day this was for him!

The next day, Mlle. Fonturigues gave him two pairs of trousers that she had found in her late father's wardrobe.

"Use the most worn for fishing. And here's an overcoat instead of those rags you've on your back. What have you done with the five francs I gave you yesterday?"

"I bought bread and dripping," answered Antoine, "and with the rest, I got some sweets."

"Sweets!" exclaimed Apolline, overcome. "Are you quite mad?"

He dared not confess that he still retained his love for sweet things.

"Did any one ask you where you got your new carriage?"

"No one," he answered. "I never speak to any one."

There was no danger that any one would recognize it, for the last, who might have remembered Apolline's plaything, had been dead many years. As for Picolo's new clothes, who was to know that they were M. Fonturigues'? . . . All the better.

For some days, it seemed to Picolo that Providence was taking special care of him. He felt stronger and he had some good catches, because the spring tide brought lobsters and tortoises towards the shore. Three times, he went into Mlle. Fonturigues' garden, when he was sure Anita was not there, and he took her some fish, and she kept him talking a little.

One evening, he found her sitting on a seat under the trees, and she was knitting as he had seen her when she was a little girl.

"But it must seem funny to you never to leave the island," she said, "after all your travels, tell me about the shipwreck at Martinique."

From that afternoon on, Picolo spent hours two or three times a week, telling Apolline about his voyages. Picolo? . . . He was no longer Picolo, he was Antoine Berditon, the sailor.

This state of affairs lasted a whole winter and while he talked in short sentences in a monotonous voice, Apolline polished the furniture, swept the floor, or mended her clothes with much energy. And Antoine realized that the only honorable object in life is to guard our inheritance from our ancestors, while Apolline wore herself out doing house work and wondering what was the object of her life, for what had she seen except one corner of the island, she who never went out except to church? Had

she shared the world's scorn for poor Berditon? Perhaps he was right after all? She had scarcely given a thought to the vast universe he described so well, and she began to reproach herself in remorse, when she looked at the home she had defended so jealously, and the furniture always in the same place; at the deeds lying in an iron box in her linen cupboard, and at all that gave her security for the future. She had lived in a stupid way, like the miller of Ardois, who tried to grind when there was no wind, and who had the water carried when the mill turned.

Still she cherished in the bottom of her heart scorn for Antoine Berditon, who had looked after his affairs so badly. He seemed to have no shame for his poverty. What was the difference between him and the jugglers who come on their patched-up caravans to the fairs? They lived from hand to mouth: so did Antoine, who was called Picolo.

Picolo! Nothing but this nickname would have prevented her from admitting that she saw him, even if it had not been for his rags, and for his miserable hut on the salt marsh.

She redoubled her precautions to prevent any one getting to know that he received charity from her.

. . . . . .

Now, one evening, when Picolo was coming back from the rocks, with his carriage nearly empty, he passed Mlle. Fonturigues' house and saw Anita, looking important and full of business. She was standing on the door step, talking to the neighbors, but there were two of the women who were strange to the district.

Picolo passed without stopping, and probably no one took notice of him. Still when he went to his hut, and

lit the fire to cook the humble food, that he had brought back, he reflected, and decided that it would be better to go to Apolline's house by the gate in the lane. He preferred to wait until nightfall.

The days that followed were dark for him. He had spent the last lot of money given him by Mlle. Fonturigues to buy rope and sweets—yes, more sweets! And he was unhappy, because he had a vague presentiment that bad times were ahead.

The misfortune came about soon: Mlle. Fonturigues was found one morning unconscious, but not dead, at the foot of her bed.

She was paralyzed. Antoine did not know this until six days later: at first, he feared something must have happened, because the gate in the lane was always closed, then his fears were confirmed when he saw the doctor's car in front of Apolline's house. One morning he saw the doctor coming out of the house, and he heard some one asking him how was his patient.

"Phew!" he said, "the best thing that can be hoped is that she won't last long. She may last a week, perhaps six months, perhaps three years, but you'll never see her doing her housework again."

Picolo stopped, and pretended to fix something more comfortably in his carriage, while he listened to the rest of the conversation: they were discussing the next election. The doctor was going to seek election on the District Council: Mlle. Fonturigues' illness did not worry him very much.

Picolo went on his way when the conversation was ended, for he had heard enough to wreck the last hope of his life.

When he reached the shore, he hid his carriage under the tamarisk as usual, and fixed the basket and nets on his back, but he sat down on the first rock to think: the only creature who had pity on him was Apolline Fonturigues, and she would never be able to help him again! He was conscious not only of sorrow and regret, but also of a strange fear of life, such as he had never before experienced. He knew well enough that he could not do without the help that had come to him in such an unexpected way, but he did not regret the money spent on sweets, nor on the hot soup that he ate now and again, nor on the scraps of boiled beef; but what grieved him was the thought that Apolline would never again listen to him talk, in the house that recalled memories of childhood, and soothed the griefs and misery of his life. He told himself that he ought to have shown his gratitude to Apolline, and he had never said "Thank you." He saw that he was a wretched helpless creature, without any hope in life.

When he realized the time, he found that the tide was up to his feet, and he was sitting on a rock surrounded by water, so he speedily caught hold of one of his sticks that was being carried by the current, and put his basket on his arm. He had to wade waist high in water to go back to his carriage.

That day, his basket was empty, and he made his way home sadly.

Before he came to the first houses, he made up his mind that, cost what it may, he would stop at Mlle. Fonturigues' door, and knock peremptorily, almost angrily, with his stick.

Anita was on duty, and she, who had never in her life spoken to this Antoine Berditon, asked him coldly:

"What do you want, Picolo?"

He could not draw himself up to answer her, but he said as proudly as he could:

"I don't know who gave you the right to call me Picolo, you impertinent girl! I want to know how Apolline is."

"Apolline? . . ."

It seemed so funny to her that she was going to show him the door, when the nurse called from upstairs:

"Come quickly, Anita, I think she's passing away."

Anita did not stop to close the door.

Antoine went straight into the house. He made his way without hesitating to the wooden staircase, and after putting his sticks on the floor at the bottom, he began to climb up on all fours. The hardest part of all was to stand up when he reached the top of the stairs, but he leaned against Apolline's bed.

Neither the nurse nor Anita saw that he was there.

He saw his friend fighting for breath and the sister was holding her up.

Suddenly, the eyes of the dying woman lit up, and she opened her mouth wide and stuttered something which Anita did not understand. She asked in a frightened voice:

"What does she say?"

The nurse bent over her and said:

"Who were you saying, mademoiselle?"

And the two women, and Picolo, heard her whisper distinctly:

"Antoine!"

They turned round and saw with astonishment the man whose name the dying woman had pronounced. They were too amazed at first to send him away, but they soon recovered and did so, in spite of Mlle. Fonturigues' feeble gesture.

Apolline lived until the early hours of the next morning.

. . . . . .

Antoine Berditon went to church, although he knew nothing definite. The church was closed but the sacristan was going in, and he soon unbolted the little south door: before long, the angelus rang. Then Antoine crossed the threshold and stretched out his hand for the holy water, just as he had done in his childhood. He went straight towards the chapel of the Virgin, where they used to say the catechism in his day, and he was so bent that he had no difficulty in kneeling down.

The sacristan swept the church a little and was surprised to see Picolo in one of the aisles.

"Goodness, what are you doing here, Picolo?"

Antoine Berditon was praying that God would save Apolline. He did not turn his head.

Two nuns appeared.

They went to the sacristan, and although they spoke in low voices, Antoine knew what they were going to do: they were to toll the funeral knell for Mlle. Fonturigues.

It was as though a new weight had been added to Antoine's burden. He was so bent that his forehead touched the flagstones. He no longer racked his memory for words, for he prayed with a full heart.

All was over! The only creature who helped him in his misery was dead! He had done with life.

The women were very astonished on the day of Mlle.

Fonturigues' funeral, when her corpse was brought before the grave, for Picolo, leaning on two sticks, carried a bunch of pinks and sea weed, and stood with his gaze riveted on the coffin over which the priest was reciting prayers. He saw it let down into the grave, but he did not notice the mourners pass by his friend's new abiding place, and scatter holy water on it.

When every one had gone, he dropped his flowers on to the coffin, and threw some earth so that no one should move them. Then he went away.

Men explained that he had known the dead woman when he was a little boy, and they showed some respect for the hapless man who venerated his childhood's memories, for they had thought him indifferent to everything before. But the women did not relent: the presence of a begger, at a ceremony that should be reserved for respectable people, outraged their sense of decency, and they turned round to see what he would do.

Picolo did not suspect that any one was concerned about him. He made his way painfully to his hut, for it was worse for him to try to walk with two sticks than to push himself along in his carriage. And on this morning he had had nothing to eat. Before leaving his hovel, he had put some crusts of bread to boil, for he had not had the heart to go fishing the day before or the day before that.

Nevertheless he noticed that the water was low in the watercourse, and he made up his mind to set out.

He had quite a good catch, but he found no pleasure in it.

By force of habit, he went home, past Apolline's house, and near there he met a policeman, who accosted him roughly.

"Picolo, I've been looking for you. Follow me."

The policeman went so quickly that Picolo could not ask him what he meant. He stopped by Mlle. Fonturigues' house and said:

"Sir, here is Berditon."

Antoine looked at the two men sitting by the round table, and he saw Anita in a corner, with her handkerchief in her hand.

"There he is," she said.

Before he knew what he was to be charged with, the unhappy Picolo knew that he was lost. The magistrate waited until the policeman went out, then he asked Anita to give Berditon a chair. He began:

"You are Antoine Berditon."

He waited in vain for an answer, and had to repeat the question.

"Then," he went on, "listen what maître Cuvelier is going to read to you."

The lawyer took a sheet of paper and read:

"I Julie-Apolline Fonturigues, being sound in body and mind, leave all my possessions to Antoine Berditon, charging him to grant the sum of two thousand francs, free of duty, to Anita Lenseigne, provided that she continues her services in the house, at the wages I gave her, namely fifty-five francs a month, if my sole legatee consents to keep her. . . ."

A few more articles followed.

When the lawyer asked him whether he would accept, Picolo stretched out his arms, shrugged his shoulders, but did not speak.

They had to explain to him that he was to inherit practically all.

"If you accept, all is well. If you don't accept, the magistrate will have to fix the seals again, because there are no known heirs."

Berditon accepted without realizing that he was choosing between wealth and desperate poverty; it took him a fortnight to grasp the fact that he was no longer poor. While the whole countryside was agog with interest in him, he went on living in his hovel; he had money but he was short of everything. He had neither bread nor meat, and he believed that he was always fated to be in that condition.

One day, however, he was summoned to appear at the lawyer's office, as he was to receive the money.

It was then that Berditon understood that he was rich, and he plucked up courage to establish himself in Apolline's house. He did not do it all at once. He began by using a room in the loft, above the shed, and he stayed there until the cold weather came. Then Anita, in her anxiety to show herself his good angel, persuaded him to use the room next to the one where Mlle. Fonturigues died. He could not at first accustom himself to the idea and it took him a week to get used to his new comforts. From that time on, he began to take an interest in his inheritance.

The first time he found Anita neglecting her work, he said to her:

"The dining room hasn't been swept."

A few days later, he noticed that the kitchen floor had not been washed and he told her about it. The girl did not take it in good part. But although Antoine had learned how to submit meekly he had not forgotten how to command.

"Anita," he said firmly, "if you don't want to lose your two thousand francs, you are to keep the house as clean as it was in Mlle. Apolline's time."

Anita was too nonplussed to reply.

She set about the housework, rubbing, dusting and sweeping, for she thought Berditon would revel in a house shining with cleanliness, after living in dirt and poverty.

She had scarcely turned her back before he began to scrutinize everywhere. One morning, when she came in, he said to her:

"There's some dust behind the linen cupboard."

Another time, he noticed that the brasses in the kitchen had not been polished, or that the heap of rubbish had been left under the kitchen window, or else the windows had not been cleaned, or there were cobwebs in Apolline's room.

It was as though his whole mind were taken up with the house, and he seemed to have forgotten his sea-going days.

From time to time, he would set off for the rocks, pushing himself in his carriage, but when he was offered a boat one day, for he was known to be rich, he said:

"What good's a boat to me?"

"But listen. You could take on three good men to help, and go fishing round the island. It would be like old times."

"No."

He answered without wavering, for he had not a shadow of regret for the past.

Anita would have had more peace, if he had gone out more, so she suggested his buying the boat, but he answered her, very much as Apolline would have done:

"See to soaking the clothes for to-morrow, and mind your own business."

She stopped herself from giving a hasty answer, and went defeated to the boiler.

Her yoke was heavier to bear now than in Mlle. Fonturigues' time. She would never have dreamed that Picolo would be such an exacting master, and she would have left but for the fear of losing her two thousand francs. Then she thought that Berditon would surely die before long, and she wished it heartily, so that she might be free. But although Berditon was tortured with rheumatism, he withstood the attack of old age.

Nevertheless, when he stayed longer than usual fishing shrimps at high tide, he began to shiver all over, and that reminded him of the time when they had landed Dakar, with his teeth chattering and in a burning fever.

At first, he refused to look after himself, but in three days, Anita insisted on calling the doctor. Berditon was skeptical about it, but he was examined and although he pretended to be asleep, he watched the doctor's face with surprise.

He was not panic stricken, but all the same, he sent Anita to ask the lawyer to call to see him the next day, and when he came, he said to him:

"There's an envelope under my pillow. Take it. My will's inside."

Then, like a good master arranging everything before setting off on a voyage, he gave many instructions to Anita. He hated the thought that this girl would survive him, for he detested her, and he let her know it, but she took it all, reflecting that after his death, nothing could withhold the two thousand francs from her.

Finally, when the funeral knell was tolled for him who had been the sailor, Berditon, the lawyer and the magistrate opened the envelope. As well as Mlle. Fonturigues' will, there was Picolo's, which was as follows:

"I wish to be buried beside Apolline Fonturigues. I leave all that I possess to Anita Lenseigne, on condition that she keeps the house clean and in the same condition as it has been, without selling anything."

Whereas Apolline Fonturigues had regretted so much living like a snail in its shell, he was firmly convinced that the finest way of living was the one his wise friend had chosen, polishing, dusting, cleaning, weeding and looking after fowls. . . .

The lawyer and the magistrate could not get over it.

. . . . . .

"Poor, dear man!" murmured Anita tearfully. "He was so good to me, and I did so like him."

In a fit of gratitude, she sent Antoine Berditon's photograph to the lawyer, to have it framed, and also a picture of the three-master wrecked at La Martinique.

"Will you have them framed for me?" she said. "I want them here."

And she, in her turn, dreamed of the great voyages of her benefactor, voyages she would never undertake, and she heartily cursed her humdrum life.

THE BOY

Maurice Courtois-Suffit

The swinging door closed noiselessly on Claude as he entered the *café-concert.* The contrast with the noise and brightness of the street made it seem almost like a fairy palace. The usual Sunday crowd had just come and Claude noticed that the atmosphere was heavy and sticky in the cabaret. This intrigued him instead of displeasing him for he was young. He was not afraid of embarking upon strange adventures nor did he fear compromising situations and words of anger. Moreover there is no time in life when a man forfeits the right to be thrilled. Why shouldn't then a man succumb to the splendor of gaudy palaces as much as to the charms of a pretty actress?

As he went down to the basement, he felt a certain refreshing chill in the air distorted by the stale reek of cold cream, orangeade and humanity. The sound of his footsteps attracted the attention of the *habilleuse,* who motioned to him to advance. He stared hard at her. The idea amused him that this decrepit old woman of sixty should spend her life in beautifying and transforming other women. Strangely enough, however, this has always been the attribute of old age, for one can cite the witches of Shakespeare.

Had it not been for the old woman, Claude would not have had the pleasure of seeing Flore dance. Flore was so graceful and slight of form and so well made up that

she looked like a girl of sixteen. Had it not been for the old woman, he would not have dared to introduce himself to Flore despite the fact that he was more than eager to do so. A tip went a long way, however. The *habilleuse* not only gave him the necessary courage but likewise supplied him with intimate details of the actress' life. She had a wealthy friend who had backed her but he scarcely ever came to the theater and did not bother her with his attentions.

Although he had made a point of saying that he wanted to meet Flore alone, the old woman announced in a deep voice:

"Ladies, a gentleman to see you."

The theater was a modest one and the artists were obliged to share the dressing rooms with several other actresses. Flore and her friend Charly, a blond, were squatting in a little cubby hole before two mirrors of unequal size when Claude arrived. Fascinated and intimidated by his own reflection in the larger mirror, he hesitated at the door. At the sight of the smartly dressed, well-built schoolboy, Flore greeted Claude with a look of welcome; she could not smile because of the number of pins between her lips.

"I've come to take you away," he said hastily and in rather a loud voice.

He stopped abruptly, for he could think of nothing more to say. He wanted to separate the two women and send Charly to the devil. He was overwhelmed by the fact that he was really in the presence of the lovely Flore, of whom he had dreamed day and night despite the fact that he scarcely knew her well enough to identify her in a crowd.

He stood still regarding her as she removed the make-up with vaseline. He was amazed that any woman could have such sweet child-like eyes. At the theater he had seen eyes that looked like hers but as he had gone nearer, he had seen the make-up. Flore's were different. They were huge eyes which seemed to want to roam in freedom all over her forehead.

Claude never experienced degrees of admiration; either he was charmed or utterly disgusted. Naturally, under these circumstances, his enthusiasm knew no bounds.

Flore put her pins on the dressing-table:

"Charly, let me introduce my dear friend," she said half mockingly.

She smiled and pulled down the neck of her dressing gown. Claude thought that with such fine shoulders, she need fear no rivals.

He found room for himself with his back to the radiator, on a seat covered with women's clothes. Usually he was a bold chap, but he felt afraid because of the presence of a third person.

He was discreet enough to await inspiration rather than start talking commonplaces or murmuring the usual flatteries which fail to please even women.

Flore took up the attack.

"Have you brought any bonbons?"

Claude recovered his self-possession and leaned towards her.

"No, I haven't brought any bonbons," he murmured. "But I hope I'll be able to please you, when we've talked a little without *berlingots* or *crèmes de menthe*.

She readjusted her dressing gown and hastily patting her hair, said:

"So you've come to take me away? Where are we going?"

He proposed the Bois de Boulogne.

She hastened to ask Charly if she would like that. Charly noticed the disappointed look on Claude's face.

She answered:

"I don't think Monsieur wants to have two girls with him instead of one."

He protested feebly but Flore insisted:

"Of course, he wants you to come. Don't you?"

He felt as if he were face to face against a prearranged plot.

There was nothing to do but to say weakly, "Yes."

Claude was sent out of the room while the women dressed. From behind the thin partitions, he could hear whispers, laughs, and the clinking of glasses: it was like the chatter of Japanese dolls. Suddenly a door would open and heads peep out, then vanish again with shrieks of merry laughter. In order to hide his indignation from these invisible creatures, Claude strove to look self-possessed and indifferent. With his hands in his pockets, he studied the names and sketches on the walls, for there, as on many other walls in Paris, idlers had spent their time in scribbling names and opinions. When Flore emerged from her dressing room, slender and intensely alive, dressed in a light tailored suit, well loaded with jewels, she announced that she was ready.

Charly waited behind in order to arrange the dressing room for she was one of the few actresses who remained tidy. After a few moments, she joined Flore and Claude. She called the costume girl and told her to dip three faded roses in cold water. Then she changed her mind. She

offered one to Claude but flushing, drew back, as if she had committed a blunder. She ended by giving back the flowers to the costume girl and saying to Claude:

"I'd offer you them if I dared but I am afraid of you!"

They went up the stairs quickly, Flore leading the way. They were glad to escape the glare of the electric light and the humidity of the cellar with its scent of eau de cologne and Turkish cigarettes.

It was hot outside. Paris reeked of petrol and dust. The old newspapers on the ground even lacked the courage to rustle. Claude and his companions felt stifled for a moment; their eyes dazzled by the brilliant sunlight and their ears by the din of the traffic. They were glad to sit back quietly in the autobus which they took to the Porte Dauphine. Whether from lack of ideas, interests in common, or perhaps because of the heat, no one spoke. Now and again they exchanged a smile and their eyes seemed to indicate a long friendship. Claude's thoughts went back to his childhood. He remembered the country and the green lanes where he had played at dolls with his boyhood friends.

In contrast to the noise and turmoil of the boulevards, the Bois presented its ever cool and reposing aspect. Flore and her friend pretended that they were unused to the autobus as they descended at the Porte Dauphine. Accompanied by Claude, they entered a "dancing" close at hand.

The hall was thronged with slowly moving couples. The trio sat down at a table near the dance floor, and watched the dancers pass, listening to the jerky music which strove to make itself heard above the mass of humanity.

Claude whispered something to Flore who sighed:

"Oh, my foot hurts me. Ask Charly instead of me."

Her answer roused the boy out of his lethargy. He realized that he had not as yet gained the battle and regretted the lost chance of a tête-à-tête with Flore. Claude was annoyed by the reply but he could do nothing but invite Charly. He was surprised at his dislike for this woman, who was not at all ugly although a trifle large. She talked to Claude, trying to please him. She told him that she loved dancing for its own sake: that she, like Flore, had a friend who would not appreciate the fact that she could go out with whom she pleased. She was anxious for Claude to remember that she was always alone in the afternoon and that she would be glad to invite him to tea. It was stupid, she said, not to be free.

Flore had finished her grenadine and when they came back to her, Charly grew silent. Flore looked at her jeweled watch, which generally gave her a rough idea of the time, and she reminded Charly that they must return to meet their respective friends.

They discussed the pleasure one had with men friends who could put a car at their disposal as they sought in vain a taxi to take them back to the Opera. They compromised ignominiously upon a victoria, a remnant of the Paris of the last century.

The horse, the red wheels and the coachman's hat, all seemed relics of by-gone days, like old Christmas cards. The springs were so old that one side of the cab almost touched the ground, and the creaking of the wheels mingled with the scrunching of gravel. They jogged slowly on while the great stupid-looking taximeter ticked like a grandfather's clock, and reminded them that the most

miserable journeys have to be paid for, until the monotony of it worked so on Flore's nerves that she exclaimed:

"Oh! that thing!"

The old-fashioned lamps stared discreetly in front; but there was no danger of Claude's being reckless, for the circumstances were not opportune.

"A man who hasn't a car is an inferior creature," asserted Claude, "I have no car, so. . . ."

"But, you're young and not bad looking," said Flore.

"She is going to fall in love with you," Charly teased.

But Flore answered wearily:

"No, I'm never going to fall in love again."

It was the first time she had spoken sincerely and simply. The source of her emotions was always a mystery.

"I was in love when I was sixteen," she went on more accurately. "I lived at home in Vendée, and my sister was trying to bring me up the way I should go. One day, she caught me with the man I loved. She locked me in my room for a week, and, although I adored the man, he never tried to see me again. All that's long ago. But it's no little thing to be the first man in a woman's life. I tell myself now that he did me a good turn. Now, I love all the things I didn't care about then: success and a good time. But I'm fed up with love. I've no time for it—life's too short."

She wanted to put on some powder, so she gave her gloves to Claude to hold.

After the crowds of people in the Bois, Paris seemed deserted. Suddenly, they noticed Charly's friend on the sidewalk. So, they went the rest of the way on foot to the restaurant, which was hidden away at the end of an "impasse." Claude turned to Flore, while the other two

walked on ahead, and asked if he was to conclude from what had been said, that there was no hope for him.

"I think," she answered, "you might be of some use to me."

And she asked him to come and see her privately.

He went to see Flore at Montmartre where she lived in a furnished flat. He felt rather like a timid schoolboy when he was going to see her, yet, he was ready to risk anything. He did not take advantage of the fact that he looked older than he was, and the success that came to him while he was still young, did not make him over-confident.

He bounded up the imitation marble staircase, for he had hurried to avoid a cloud of dust coming from where the stonemasons were working near by. He wondered whether his heart were beating faster because of his emotion, or because of his anxiety to save his suit from getting dusty. He was uncomfortably hot, and the cool air inside the building brought him no relief. He knocked and a thickset little maid showed him into the dining-room where Flore was playing false notes on the piano.

She was in a walking costume, and she had her hat on, although Claude had come early—at four o'clock precisely—to surprise her. She stopped playing and turned round. She saw the look of enthusiasm vanish from Claude's face, when he saw the untidy room and a bottle of porto on the table. For a moment, the woman was troubled, then she rose and said with a babyish pout:

"Don't you like my home?"

He reassured her. But wouldn't she like to go out? Wasn't it understood that they were to go and have tea somewheres? He had not expected such a disappoint-

ment. She took off her hat and Claude gave such a longing sigh that she scolded:

"Who's going to do my business for me, anyhow?"

She put her hand in Claude's.

"You're to come with me, and you ought to be glad of it. We'll take a taxi, for I can't go without."

When she was talking, she looked like a little girl. Not knowing what else to do, she went into her room, and he followed her. She said nothing, but dabbed her dress with scent; and sprinkled some on Claude. He caught her hand as she passed, but she drew back quickly, saying:

"I don't like any one to touch my arm. It ruins the skin," she went on, as she pulled on her hat before the mirror:

"And anyway, I don't like it."

Claude sat on the bed. He felt awkward after the rebuff.

He began to remember similarly embarrassing situations in his life, but he knew he was not one of the repulsive people who have to be kept at a distance, as though they had the plague. Being perverse, he played with a wrap that was lying about.

Flore called out from the cupboard:

"Will you stop fingering that, old thing? I wish you would."

They heard a kind of sizzling from the direction of the kitchen, and Flore said:

"You might go and have a look at the beans. I don't think the maid's there. They're boiling over or something, I can hear them. For once I dine here. . . ."

If any one had stopped at the foot of the stairs to spy,

he would have known by their footsteps, that two people were coming in a hurry. Flore seemed eager to raise some barrier between herself and Claude: either a third person or the pretense of being in a hurry. Just now, she had left the door open, so that the maid was within hearing: now she was making for the street. Claude wondered whether all these ruses were necessary to their pleasure; he wished Flore would be frank with him. He realized well enough that other people would have been glad of his friendship, whereas Flore left him in doubt. He congratulated himself on not having showered flowers on her; and he decided that, if she declined his next attempt at friendship, she must be lacking in that subtile quality which men vaguely call "temperament." He asked her to come with him to a quiet "maison de thé," but she answered:

"My foot hurts, I must have it seen to."

She explained that she had scratched it with a pin and it must be attended to immediately. Flore was almost bad tempered, because she objected to the paradox of "paying to suffer." It was rather surprising that the question of money annoyed her, seeing that a wealthy Spaniard offered her all that money could buy; pearls and furs to her heart's content.

They went to the chiropodist's, who lived on the ground floor of a house, which was like a show at a fair, with the electric apparatus in the corners. There were armchairs scattered here and there, and the air was heavy with the scent of rose water. The chiropodist worked in silence. His wrinkled face showed that he was not young. His face was so like that of the old charwoman, that one only needed a brush to complete the picture. His eyes re-

minded Claude of a fish's, as he had seen them when he had wandered without permission into the kitchen at home.

Flore sat down, and took off her doeskin gloves, then removed her shoe and stocking, and stretched out a shapely little foot. An electric light bulb shed its light on the ankle; Claude crouched close to Flore in the shadow, but he dared not move. He caressed her hand gently, and thought of the pleasure of dying surrounded by many Flores.

"Don't make me move," she whispered. "I'm rather fragile."

"I wouldn't do anything to harm you." She had not taken off her hat.

"I want you more than ever now I've seen your foot. What does that mean?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"A pretty foot is a rare find."

"Fine chance for you, then."

"And I want to kiss it."

"I won't frighten you any more, to-day," she added taking his arm.

When a word rings false in love, it is like discord in music, and it jars badly on a highly strung organism.

"That's how love pleases you, is it?" he asked reproachfully, in a changed voice.

"You can take it from me: what you call love is like an iced cake you want when you're outside the shop, but when you've eaten it—disappointment."

"But, I don't mind being disappointed by you."

The man in the white gown did not seem to be listening. He was bending over the foot.

"What are the golden threads binding your hair?" asked Claude.

Flore was concerned about the chiropodist, and she was frowning. Claude went on:

"I know. This tiny thread is like a little tendril. I'd love to touch it."

"You men are all the same—always wanting to touch things."

He pretended to notice for the first time the color of her eyes.

"I say, you've got black eyes."

"Ah . . . when I'm really roused, they're blue-green."

"That's a pity. I don't like them."

"I can't help that!"

"You don't know what's good. See how soft your material is, and you don't touch it. It's delightful to the touch . . . see, and your arm. . . ."

"Again. . . . No."

"If you forbid me, very well. As a matter of fact I didn't feel your skin, for I was thinking of something else. I was thinking of the bark of a young birch tree in spring—how delightful its fragrance."

"You're a cheerful person."

"It's not fair of you to shatter my illusions."

After the darkness of the little room, their eyes had to grow accustomed to the bright light outside.

He did not take Flore home. He perceived instinctively that there was an obstacle in his way, but he wanted to keep up an appearance of superiority, and it was not easy. Claude shut himself up at home during the following days, and worked, although he was harassed by his passion. He wondered whether Flore was making fun of him, and,

because he believed himself unhappy, his mind grew more active, and he planned out a scheme of campaign. Since she refused to accept him as a friend, he thought he was justified in deceiving Flore. He remembered Charly's words: "I receive friends like you when I'm alone. You must come and see me," and he tried to imagine what was her real character. Inevitably, the picture of the other came before him; and he thought of the proverb: "Love the blonde and you will be loved by the brunette." He had heard it said that the less one aimed at achieving anything, the more easily it came into one's reach. There may be grounds for this theory, but Flore could not be expected to act according to any set formula. Women are not bound to secure the happiness of the first comer, especially happiness of this kind.

. . . . . .

Paris is a city of hidden illusion and enduring enchantment, which intrigues and harasses him who goes out to seek them.

When he went to Charly's, Claude felt nothing of the enchantment, but he was conscious of the satisfaction of success. Every new discovery reaffirms a certain innate faith in us, for we were not born to be failures.

Charly lived in a flat at Passy, ten minutes' walk from where Claude lived. Being of a vacillating disposition he risked it, finally, because the task of going there was so easy.

Plucking up courage one afternoon he went down the rue de la Tour. There was scarcely any one about, because, in the residential quarters, the people avoid the heat of the afternoon sun in June. His steps resounded on the asphalt, and he took the inhabitants by surprise

as he looked into the courtyards on the ground floor. The quietness of the road, and the pictures of domestic life he caught sight of reminded him of the village and the country where he had lived. Claude's thoughts traveled back to the little town in Beauce where he had lived as a little boy, and he almost expected to see gardens with rosetrees in between the houses. He would not have been surprised if bees and wasps had started buzzing round, with their diaphanous wings shining. Wasn't it the sound of the sickle that he heard? It was a dairy woman at her sewing machine on her doorstep. Why must all our dreams end by vanishing as utterly as soap bubbles? Claude's picture of a toiling woman, and the even swing of the sickle was reduced to the movement of a sewing machine which was the reality. It was an abrupt anti-climax.

He awoke to reality with a start, and realized that he had arrived. He went up a fine staircase, and hesitated before ringing; then a shrill whistle broke the silence. His heart was beating fast.

A housemaid showed Claude into a little salon: the windows were opened on to a balcony where Madame was sitting smoking. Charly turned to see who her visitor was, half-blinking her eyelids. She exclaimed: "How nice of you!" and put her hands up to pull out her hair, which had got flattened.

Claude reminded her of their conversation in the Bois. She said, almost immediately:

"Oh, so the stunt with Flore is off, is it?"

The question was shrewd, and difficult to answer, but Claude intended to show himself quite at his ease. He invented touching words of flattery. They sat down at

the same moment on a settee. The rattle of carts in the street could be heard, and the trickle of water from a pipe on the trees outside. There was a heavy smell of withered narcissi in the room, and particles of dust floated down from the ceiling, lit up by the sunlight.

Claude found no difficulty in talking naturally and simply of mutual friends and general topics, but by tacit agreement they did not mention Flore. As he leaned back among the cushions, Charly admired his long form, and she longed to make their friendship richer and more precious. She took him round the other rooms and her room, compared with the taste shown in furnishing the salon and dining-room, was simple in the extreme. There was nowhere to sit but the bed, because the only armchair was covered with lace. Charly sank down, making a deep hollow, in the bed, and invited Claude to sit beside her. She sighed, and said softly:

"That cupboard was a present. So was the carpet; it was brought from Tunis. He gave me those fine glasses you saw too. And this scent's from him."

She stretched out her bare arm, so that her visitor could breathe the perfume. Her skin was warm and brown and made him wonder whether she was really fair or dark.

Claude glanced at the girl and drew back. He was amazed at this turn of events; it upset all his calculations, and yet it did not set him quite at his ease. Possibly the fine layer of make-up, which, although charming from a distance, was not pleasing at close quarters—possibly that disconcerted him by bringing back unpleasant memories or perhaps it was the photograph (which he had only just noticed) of Flore on the Prom-

enade des Anglais at Nice. It was a shock to see the girlish profile and naïve child-like eyes: Flore represented the type he loved. The picture in his mind, was associated with certain memories of the côte d'Azur; it impelled him to realize what his true desire was, the desire that had sprung up periodically ever since childhood, like links in a chain:

"The telephone, Charly!"

She took it down, and spoke in a low voice. Her words seemed abrupt and strange in the silence. It was Flore calling to ask the address of a dyer; Charly grew calmer and patted her hair, although it was not disheveled.

"Guess who's with me?—Yes, a man.—Yes, you know him.—He's come to me to be consoled.—Yes, that's right. —I'll pass you to him."

Through the receiver, Claude heard the voice of a woman whose self-respect had been outraged; yet, in spite of her anger, it soon became soft and laughing, seductive. But her jealousy overcame her: she asked Claude to go and see her the next day, then she attacked him:

"You're deceiving me. It's not fair. Just because I was in a bad temper the other day."

Claude was almost ready to believe that absolute happiness would be his within twenty-four hours, for he was still young enough to have faith in the boundless possibilities of adventure. He promised all, that the voice at the other end of the wire demanded, because he was firmly convinced that he had committed a breach of good faith, that he had sinned against honor, and he was anxious to wipe out all traces of his relations with Charly. He felt obliged to leave this room, so he rose with the most absurd excuse: "It's so late!" His haste was like a

schoolboy's when he comes out of class. His enthusiasm for the one idol bred contempt for the other, whom he wanted to shun; he had only brutal words for her now.

From the time he went out, Claude was distracted by thoughts of remorse, anguish and hope, but he felt that the voice of wisdom warned him: "Instead of striving to caress space. . . ."

. . . . . .

Flore unfolded the newspaper that was round the copper ball, and looked about the shop for an assistant.

She had decided to send a "poire de lit" to her Mother in Vendée, and wild horses would not prevented her from doing so. She was conscious of the futility and the ennui of the inevitable interviews with men, with all the accompanying attributes: the sultry silence outside; the smoke of a half-dead cigarette—in short, she had given up the idea of playing with the boy with whom she had spoken on the phone twenty hours before. She did not know why she had lost the desire. She remembered that Charly had told her at the theater, in the evening, that there had been nothing between her and Claude; but a mood of indifference had seized her. If surrender is not immediate and irresistible, it is often no more than imitation; it gives ground for the charge of our colored sisters, who say we have more head than heart.

In the dark shop where no daylight seemed to penetrate Claude and Flore endured the reek of painted iron, and of recently washed floors. They stood before the cash-desk, Claude docilely following his tormentor. He had gone back to the first stage of worship, fascinated by her magic spell rather than driven by force of reasoning. He was so much in love, that he had let her know the extent

of a young man's fidelity. Now, he was finding out the difficulties of breaking away: he pursued his friend to her milliner's and furrier's, to her confiseur's, or dentist's.

They came out of the shop, and Flore wanted to go to a "bar" in the Boulevard Sebastopol.

The heat disturbs the circulation, and alters the association of ideas or the power of a charm.

Claude was losing patience, and growing bad tempered. Flore watched him. He was fidgeting nervously with his gloves; she pressed his arm, and said in a conciliatory way, with the familiarity she used during times of truce:

"Wouldn't you like to buy me something for my fireplace—a pewter?"

He bent towards her, smiling, then flushed, and said:

"Do you really need it, when you have a furnished flat?"

"But I'll take it with me when I move. It'll be a souvenir."

"A souvenir of what?" he asked stormily. "Unless I'm mistaken there's nothing between us."

"Quite, but there might be, if I saw you give any signs of wanting to please me."

He jeered.

"You don't think I'm taken in, do you?"

"As you like."

They quickened their steps again, in the din of the street that smelt of petrol and hot buns. Claude was unhappy, and he blamed the noise and heat of the street. He wanted to put a stop to the quibbling, so he said:

"You detest me, then?"

"I don't see why I should answer you," she replied.

"You take no interest in the things I care about. That's all there is to it."

"But I know you hate me; I know it," he insisted. "I could cry."

"Oh! you're a bore! Cry if you want to, but leave me alone."

He tried to change his attitude, and drew Flore's attention to a tiny crystal toy that a vendor was dangling on the end of a string. It was a coarse reproduction of the winged emblem of love.

"If I offer you that, are you tempted?"

She shrugged her shoulders for reply this time. Then as they were isolated in the crowd on the Boulevard, he put his arm round her gently, and said:

"Listen; I love you. You must belong to me."

With a quick movement Flore freed herself and, in a voice that combined malice and sarcasm with indifference, she said:

"But, you're quite absurd, if you only knew it. Stop this kind of thing. If that is what your passions are worth, you can gratify them cheaply enough. And if you want to, you've only to marry Charly.

Was he losing his conquest? He sought in vain for the right answer, but he could think of nothing to say. He looked at Flore. He knew that he was losing hold. She was slipping from his grasp. He was dizzy and he felt as though waters were closing over him.

Sitting on the leather seats in a "bar" the people looked like so many stupid animals. It was in spring and the noises of the street floated in through the open windows.

Flore was at a table with her seventy-year-old friend. His face was oily, and a girl sitting near him amused herself by playing with a straw on her nose. Flore was being charming and kind. Did she want to conquer or reconquer? She monopolized the old man's attention, and the game with the straws ceased. She led the conversation which was quite animated. Claude was silent. He was as much a stranger to them as the players in an orchestra are to those who dance. He was afraid of appearing ridiculous. He whispered to Flore:

"I must go now, but I'll bring you a surprise tomorrow."

She answered with a nod, but did not stop him. He went out alone, deserted by his false friend. In spite of the crowd on the Boulevard, he felt lonely and isolated. What had happened on this June day that ended in a medley of restaurants, apéritifs and hairdressers?

A present is the means of cementing attachments for men who are physically repulsive, and it makes them happy, prolonging their hope; for others it is an investment, with the usual risks.

After the matinée on the following Sunday, Claude had taken Flore some perfume, in a satin basket. This modest present had the double advantage of not being extravagant and of being a surprise. Flore could not refuse to talk to him. He asked her to go out with him anywhere, in the street, or wherever she liked.

They went to the Neuilly fair. It was an unfortunate choice, but Flore's whims generally ran counter to common sense. He had to endure Charly's company. She had invited herself, and it was the first time he had seen her, since his visit to her. She did not seem to bear any

grudge against him, and she talked like a friend with whom no restraint was necessary.

They were all disappointed. They roamed among the booths, and saw the marvels of the shows, but before long they sought to get away from the crowd, with its smell of fried potatoes and gingerbread.

Crowds thronged the tramcars that rocked uncertainly on the line, and at the barrier, they took a taxi. Flore did not hesitate to go out of her way to put Charly down at the Madeleine, to please her.

When they arrived in Montmartre, Flore did not want any one to see a man bringing her home, so she stopped the car in a street nearby. The shutters were closed everywhere and the golden light of sunset glowed on the houses. The sultry stillness was like that of Africa. When Claude proposed another evening of the kind, she accepted immediately and made the appointment.

"You've been nice," she said, "and you brought me the scent. I see you're trying to please me."

The taximeter was ticking on. She added:

"You've deserved a kiss."

She laid her cheek on the man's shoulder, and bent towards him. Claude scarcely held her, he was listening to something else, and he scarcely looked at her as he kissed her. His eyes were fixed on the number of the car: 714-G.3.

Her lips were on his; then Flore drew back and her spell, deep and lasting, made of face cream and scent—her spell ended.

. . . . . .

Head lights were shining in the Bois, and cars purring. Flore and Claude were sitting at a table in the darkness

listening to the rattle of glasses. Some one lit a cigarette. A couple came out in silence.

Again, she wanted to please her friend, and as it was her first free evening, the music-hall having closed, she gave it up to him. The lights shone through the trees, which were like lace lampshades. Claude could not see the bulb for a tree-trunk.

"It is intimacy, then is it," sighed Claude.

"I have to work for my living," answered Flore.

"But the revue's over, and to-morrow we could—"

"I've got some things to do to-morrow."

"Send your maid."

"I don't want to have her back, because I owe her some money."

He caught her arm.

"Since I've known you, I've never seen you alone."

"If you would like to oblige me, you would stay at home with me."

She explained that she owed her maid three months' wages and that some of her clothes were not paid for, on the other hand, her photographs were waiting for her, but she had no money. These were all unexpected expenses, or rather she had miscalculated for once, and it was vexing, because her wealthy friend refused any extras, although he cemented his friendship with a monthly allowance. And she hesitated before borrowing from a woman friend, while a man. . . . And she entered on a dissertation. . . .

"I understand there are some men. . . ."

Claude naturally and humbly took the hint and accepted on condition that he should be regarded as a good friend.

"No, when I promise, I promise . . ." she announced. "I give you my word of honor."

Claude looked sentimentally at the lights; gentle breezes swayed the flowers, and they bent before them. Flore laughed silently.

"It looks as though I'm selling myself, doesn't it?"

She smoothed her eyebrows, and added:

"All the same, you can do something for me. And I would do anything for you."

Murmurs came from the lake near by, and the splash of the oars in the water. She said she was glad to be on holidays and not to have to endure the breath of an uncongenial partner on her face. It was one of the paradoxes of life that Claude could not have danced with her: they could have worked well together. Sharing work draws men and women together more closely than sharing pleasures. During the next year, she expected to go abroad, probably to Italy. She looked at the pool of water, reflecting the glitter of lights hidden among the trees, and as she distinguished the shining flowers from the pale water lilies, she wondered whether a lake of this kind was like Venice, the city of sensual delight.

She imagined herself there, but alas! such visions are fleeting! Dreams are crushed under the weight of the reality of every-day life, under the difficulties of dealing with men, and the hostility of friends. In that, she would be glad if Claude could give her the money immediately, so that she could buy some tartlets for their tea the next day, and send the maid to pay her bills. At all events, they would be free from restraint in her flat: Claude would not meet her, and that would be better.

Flore accepted the thousand francs a little shame-

facedly, when he handed them to her under the table. (Ever since he had known her, he carried all his student's savings with him, fearing lest he should not be rich enough to comply with her demands, she being a woman accustomed to spend money freely.) Flore wanted to go back home and she let Claude accompany her to the door, where she kissed him quickly.

He wanted to go to her flat, but she would not let him run the risk of meeting her backer and they would see enough of one another the next day. To console him, she promised she would meet him the next day at the Porte Dauphine Restaurant. They would spend the day together. He still wanted to go up with her, until she said:

"Do you want to make trouble between my friend and me? Or don't you ever want to set eyes on me again?"

. . . . . .

He did not as much as glance at the newspaper he had brought, for he knew he could never read when he was worked up to a high pitch of emotion. He stared at passers-by, for he was sitting in the garden of the Pavilion where he could see all who entered. He had not slept well and he was suffering from the suspense of waiting a joy that was long in materializing. The only sounds he heard were those of the waiter's footsteps, and the beat of pigeons' wings. He felt as though he had been forced to look into the depths of an abyss, where he could only distinguish objects vaguely: he preferred to look elsewhere. For an hour and a half he tortured himself, and still Flore did not come.

This method of long-drawn-out agony resulted in a kind of mental stupor and confusion. He felt vaguely that he

ought to go, but he could not bring himself to understand the best means of setting off. Since he had lingered for an hour and a half, reflecting over the sacrifice of his happiness, ought he not to wait a little time yet? Would it cost him much to have patience for a while longer, lest he should miss his last chance?

He watched the cars meet and pass in a stupid, futile way. They went forward, then back, they turned and hesitated; they seemed to waste their energy for nothing but they were acting in obedience to some will. Claude thought of the number of times in his life a man has to decide whether to act or not to act. Just then he rose feeling strangely dizzy. There was a mist in the Avenue du Bois, and there were dark clouds blotting the clearness of the sky in places.

The same day, Flore rang up to explain her absence to Claude.

A woman's voice said: "Mademoiselle informs Monsieur that she will not be at home to him this afternoon as arranged, because the Doctor has ordered her to go to the country."

Claude lost his presence of mind, for the deception surprised him and stupefied him. Fortunately, his anguish did not last long, for a reaction set in. Mad impulses occurred to him. He wanted to kill some one, or to cry out to the walls: "I love you!" He would have rushed to her flat, but instinctively his pride held him back or perhaps he felt it would be a useless journey, for he would have to avoid meeting the other man, face to face.

He tried to meet Flore elsewhere; either at the "bar" in the Avenue de l'Opéra, or in the Boulevard de Sébastopol, or in some of the shops she frequented. He did not

see her. Then he thought of going to her theater, or more accurately to the dancing hall near by, where she sometimes stayed on with her friends.

When he arrived there, he met Charly, who, well made-up, was hurrying out. What was she doing there? Where was she going? He tried to stop her by speaking a friendly word, but she went on her way with a laugh and a gesture of the hand.

He resigned himself to his fate, and the second period of suffering began. It was more cruel than the first; when he knew for certain that he had been deceived, the wound was all the harder to bear. The only consolation was that now it could be no worse.

From sheer peversity he called for a glass of orangeade. In the silent room there was only a man and a woman taking tea in the darkest corner under the stairs. There was a rose-pink netting on the windows, and rose shades on the lights. The carpets and tables seemed to be waiting for the orchestra, in a tense silence.

Not wanting to drink, Claude watched the couple, and the sight made him feel less bitter. He listened to the irregular tinkle of the spoons against glasses, and observed the couple as they leaned towards one another: "Yes, it is too strong—a drop of milk . . ."

Claude saw the waiter come softly down the stairs. He felt stifled. As it was, some one upstairs began to drum discordant notes on a piano. He rose dazzled; at the same moment, he wanted to sit down. After all, wasn't it all worth the trouble of lighting a cigarette?

OTHER PEOPLE'S MEALS

Lucie Delarue-Mardrus

"What's he doing there?" they asked one another after about half-an-hour of talking about nothing. They began to watch him closely as he stood on the threshold; he had a determined chin and a good nose; his hair was brushed back and so smoothed down with grease that it shone like a duck's back. They gave their verdict:

"He's smart."

The women were standing about in groups laughing and talking, in the midst of the surroundings that went to make up the fashionable and rather nerve-racking life they loved. The bowl of sweetly-smelling roses, the untidy tea-table, the disordered chairs, even the summer sun coming through the windows, all were part of their life.

The dresses they wore gave one the same impression as a bed of flowers of many colors. Their arms were bare, their hair short and their hats lying about on the chairs.

They were so absorbed in talking that they had not even noticed that the men at the reception had left them to go into the garden. The hostess was not with them either, but that didn't matter, for no one goes to a reception for the sake of the hostess; the chief attraction is to meet the other people invited, to smoke cigarettes and make short work of *petits fours*.

Some one else arrived, and the din was renewed with talk and introductions, and below the noise of voices, there was whispering:

"I say, Yvonne. Do you know what that is, the one over there?"

Yvonne glanced at him.

"Good Lord," she said, "he's the type of man who is always hovering about Mme. Polevrier. And it's been going on for three years now!"

"Poor blighter! Is he in love with her?"

Yvonne laid her hat on the settee, and said in the way they would all have said it, and with the gesture common to all of them.

"He's mad on her."

They stifled their laughter like so many school girls, although in reality, few of them were really young, and almost all were either divorced or living with other men, but there is a certain class of women in Paris who, as soon as they meet together, behave just as they did in their schooldays, when silly little secret societies and mysterious signs and pass-words were the rage.

"What's his name?"

"What does he do?"

There was no answer to these questions, because a crowd of men surged into the salon, following, as usual Mme. Polevrier. The hostess, a former actress, came in. She was wealthy now, and she wore a thick chain of pearls, but she was fat.

No one saw Calixte grow purple with fury; he was the victim of love and jealousy. For four years, ever since he had begun her portrait, he had been tortured by Germaine Polevrier. He fell in love with her while he painted her: for she had golden hair, a pearl-like complexion, gray eyes with penciled eyebrows, and a fine mouth with small teeth. He was fascinated by it all, and not least

by her milk white skin, and by the graceful lines of her form, accentuated by her carefully chosen clothes.

He had never even had the chance of telling her that he loved her, for she had told him she would pose only on condition that her various lovers should watch the sittings.

She could not do without them.

For a fortnight, Calixte painted furiously. His ample fortune was an obstacle to his success as an artist, for, not being obliged to earn his living, he soon grew indolent and fastidious.

Germaine did not pose for long. Her artist-man bored her; she preferred dancing. And now his very presence annoyed her, and by her indifference, she persecuted him cruelly.

"My dear Calixte, if you only knew how you annoy me!"

This was all the consolation he received, in spite of his pleading whispers and the hungry look in his eyes when he was silent.

. . . . . .

When she rebuffed him as usual, he went to roam in the garden. It was then that the women noticed him, and it was then too that a certain old banker remarked to the mistress of the house:

"You did right to invite him, my dear! His genius is quite unique. I wish you'd tell what happens, when the merchants get on his track!"

What now? A mysterious breeze coming from the horizon towards Auteuil to relieve the oppression of the heat wave? or some new disappointment, some caprice that made Germaine Polevrier say:

"Where are you, Calixte? I'm looking for you." She

came up to him at a turn in the path, having left behind her the mixed company of the reception, where no artist would have strayed, but for her sake.

"You don't know how glad I am to see you to-day. You're about the only interesting person in this reception."

A quarter of an hour after he took her out in his little two seater. It was painted so that it shone like a toy, its ends came to a point like a boat, and it was swift as an aeroplane.

They went away, and left gossiping women behind them.

It was autumn before he realized his good fortune. The idea of doing without her other friends never entered Germaine Polevrier's golden head and she tortured her new friend for weeks. She did not love him; had she ever loved any one?

Among a crowd of others, he had to follow her wherever her caprice led her in Paris, as well as at the seaside, and the more ground she gave him for being jealous, the more intense his jealousy became. He saw her at balls, and he saw her bathing, and whether she was dancing in another man's arms, or flirting with bathers, she seemed to play the coquette with the express purpose of trying his long suffering.

Every day, he vowed he would leave her for ever, but a glance from her was enough to bring him back to her, and, like a mouse at the mercy of a cat, he let her torment him and fascinate him all over again.

He heard about all his predecessors from her, for she spared him no details of her various episodes, and yet she forced him to be affable with them, on pain of in-

mediate separation from her. In consequence of his defeat and cowardice, the poor victim endured so much that he began to look as though he were suffering from a fatal disease, and his family and friends thought he was in consumption.

"You must be careful," they would say. "I was just like that myself four years ago. You're running risks, going on like that."

Moreover, he was ruining himself. Nothing costs more than a woman who asks for no pay.

The end of the season. . . .

She had promised that she would spend a fortnight with him at his country house in the mountains. It was his second triumph, the second elopement in the little two-seater; but this time, the artist knew where he was taking his victim.

It was a little old house deep in a pine wood, with a round lake that reflected the house. The mountains round about were like the country of the moon. The nearest village was six miles away.

There was a wrinkled old caretaker, a dog, and some fowls. A cart that came once a week to bring bread, meat and grocery.

He had given her no details; he had simply said: "It's fine there, you'll see, and quite wild." To a woman of her type, a wild place is one that has no casino. She had a trunk filled with expensive sporting clothes fastened to the back of the car, and she carried her long-eared Pekinese on her knee. He was the innocent witness of the various complications of her life.

She was slightly curious about this remote country where flirts and amusements were a new thing . . .

They drove up the rough road to the house without lighting the lamps.

The old caretaker was standing on the doorstep, wearing her best black dress and a big cameo.

She welcomed them with great respect, although no doubt the arrival of her young master with a strange woman was quite an event, and source of dismay to her. Germaine was amused, and smiled at her.

"Before going in, let's go and see the garden."

In the late twilight, when it was almost dark, the fair Polevrier, arm in arm with her friend, and followed by her little dog, sauntered through the wilderness where there remained but few traces of the flowerbeds and lawns that had existed.

"Very fine!" she said, thinking of something else.

But when they were coming back past the dog kennel (there was a new dog that Calixte did not know), a tragedy nearly occurred: for the watchdog, pulling at his chains, rushed at the Pekinese, who was not quick enough to avoid the big dog's attack.

Germaine screamed; the artist called out in distress, and the caretaker came to see what was happening. In the arms of his mistress the precious little toy dog was trembling like a leaf under his long red brown hair. Then the watchdog looked fiercely at the intruder, growled, showed his teeth and made a dive for the basin that was full of biscuit, which he proceeded to devour speedily.

"Just look there!" said the caretaker. "And I know he's not famished, but he thought we would give his food to Madame's dog, that's why he's in such a hurry to eat it all. He's a wise dog—likes other people's meals!"

Germaine was appeased and she began to laugh. She liked the old woman, that was clear. She had never before known any one of her type.

When they went into the house, she went into raptures about it all, as though she knew all about everything, and understood.

"It's simply great, my dear. Everything in keeping inside!"

She would have been hard put to it if she had to say what it was in keeping with, but a few meaningless tags satisfied her curiosity and exemplified her knowledge.

It was cold, the caretaker lit the fire that was laid in the grate.

"It's great," the woman repeated. She was chilly.

She went on repeating that it was great, when they were at table eating roast fowl, cream cheese and crystalized fruits; and again when she saw her canopied bed, with its flowered curtains and warm sheets. Her vocabulary was too limited to offer any variation; everything was "great," and the expression is useful for fools and for those who are too lazy to think for any other.

Calixte however was eloquent enough for two; he did not lack powers of expression. His joy worked up into such a crisis of rapture that Germaine realized in her astonishment that this man was somehow different from the others she had had. When he thought of his former rivals, and named them one by one, he laughed, showing his teeth like a wolf. He was enjoying to the full his victory won after so much misery.

"You're mine," he said, "you're wholly mine now. You belong to me, you're in my house, in my country; you're mine, you belong to me!"

And he made her feel the force of his possession as vehemently as he could.

It was noon and she was still sleeping. He had been leaning over her bed, gazing at her breathlessly. Through the awful silence of the mountains, something seemed to whisper in his ears:

"I love her. She's mine. The others can never steal her from me."

Finally, she woke up. After she had had coffee, and after he had kissed her, she said, smiling:

"What are we going to do to-day?"

He did not answer. She had not yet found out that she was in a wilderness.

She dressed herself with great care, taking a long time over it. She hesitated over her choice of a jumper to wear, for she was anxious to look fascinating, as she expected to meet strangers, at lunch.

"Am I beautiful?"

He knelt before her to worship her. The caretaker knocked at the door to say that lunch was ready. It was nearly two o'clock.

At table, he began by saying:

"To-day you're going to see my mountains. We'll walk."

She asked whether there were any sledges.

Like a hypocrite he answered:

"No, but there are other things."

He was preparing delightful surprises for her, and she was eager to set off as soon as they had finished lunch, for she was quite excited at the prospect. They left the little dog in the old woman's charge, and set off, arm in arm.

At the end of the first half hour, Germaine began to

realize that they were alone in the mountains; they climbed with the aid of sticks, and saw nothing but mountain peaks and sky.

"Where are we going?" she inquired.

"Up there."

"It must be a Kursaal," she thought, and heroically went on climbing. He was in front of her, and he helped her over the most difficult places. He clenched his teeth, and looked enraptured.

How much longer would this go on? They reached a summit, which was not very high, but so placed as to command a fine view. Calixte stopped, and called out, panting:

"We've arrived."

All around them, the mountains rolled one after another; there was the blue sky above, and a little cloud at their feet, away in the distance a valley with fields and cattle, and a few houses, to the right a blue mountain and to the left, the mountains were rosy, and golden and purple.

"Look!" he commanded.

She was amazed, and could do nothing but look.

"Now, what about it?"

He was a-fire with enthusiasm.

"Now, you see it. This is my childhood, it's my life, and you're the queen of my life, the queen of my country. Germaine! Germaine! I don't regret a moment of my suffering, for this is worth it all. I'm happy. It's fine to climb. And I love you."

He had his arms around her, and he was trembling. She was frowning, almost terrified, and yet she dared not speak. She had a vague feeling that, whatever she would

say, would bring the poet from his giddy heights down to earth. Her wonder grew, and her eyes were full of awe when she looked at him.

. . . . . .

He had brought lunch in his knapsack, and they ate it, sitting on the edge of infinite space. He told her about his childhood, and then asked her to repeat the details he knew well enough about his rivals. He interrupted her from time to time, and clasped her until he hurt her.

They did not return until after nightfall. He had almost carried her for the last half hour, and in the stillness and splendor of that uninhabited wilderness, as wild as at the beginning of the world, she felt the strength of man, and the weakness of woman dependent upon him.

It was only when she was sitting by the fire after dinner, nursing her Pekinese, that she dared to say:

"But is there nothing in this country? no one?"

"Nothing. No one, but you and I."

Sitting at her feet, he spoke to her of all that he had never before spoken to a living soul, and she listened to him for the first time. He waxed poetic and abstruse, and she felt elated.

Even in a being of her type, simply because she is a woman, there lies a latent dream that yearns for satisfaction; her desire was being fulfilled now. They spent a more glorious night than the previous one.

. . . . . .

She scarcely regretted having brought so many creations in her trunks for she thought it worth while to dress for his sake.

Each day he took her further beyond the pines and the lakes, and each day a strange and terrible feeling gained

strength in Germaine Polevrier's heart. She dared not admit it yet, for she was afraid.

One night, Calixte asked:

"Swear to me that you have never before lived with any man as you are living with me, alone with Nature, away from pleasures."

"Look me straight in the face, Calixte! I swear that it is the first time."

"Then you're mine," he whispered, "mine, mine alone."

And that night, Germaine felt that they were sublime in their love.

After a week of solitude and fresh air, Calixte grew calmer, and his restless frenzies gave place to a state of glad contentment. He was tender and gay, and he exercised a gentle authority over the woman. They went to bed early, got up late, and lived a simple healthy life, eating their food heartily.

. . . . . .

Suddenly, the weather became cold and Germaine muffled herself up.

"To-day we're going higher up than ever!" Calixte announced. "We'll set off at daybreak." She was in his power, and she had to follow wherever he led. When they reached the first stage, they had encountered many difficulties, and he said:

"Germaine! . . . I implore you. We'll rest just now. Do stand on this stone; it was simply made to be a pedestal for you. Let me look at you. I brought you to the heights. I want to admire my statue."

She obeyed him. She was like an idol, and she had never known such worship throughout all her experience of love. The ordinary run of men treated her gallantly,

but for the most part as a comrade. They had nothing to offer beyond cars, tennis, theaters, dances, and she had thought that life had nothing else to offer, but the meaning of true love was revealed to her in the icy atmosphere of the mountains. To be loved in the way that Calixte loved her was the only thing that would satisfy the insatiable yearning of her woman's heart.

The isolation of her position began to affect her; she felt as unique and as remote as a star. Maybe she would change somehow . . . be a different woman in the future.

She stood rather awkwardly on her pedestal while he gazed fixedly on her. The cold was disturbing the faint pink shades of her pearl-like complexion, and the keen wind had made her painted eyes run, until there was no more make-up left. Germaine had red eyelids, and pale, insignificant eyebrows, and there were patches of sunburn on her cheeks. In the bright morning light, her features brooked of no camouflage. She stood still on her pedestal to be worshiped as she was formed by nature. Her broad mouth had a somewhat foolish expression; her nose was too big, and her head looked too big for her slender body.

The silence was painful.

"Is this the creature I love?" said Calixte to himself in amazement. And it was as though he were seeing her for the first time.

Eventually, Germaine came down from her pedestal. She expected embraces and fond words; as she approached, Calixte recoiled slightly.

"It's really too cold up here," he said, "would you like to go down?"

She was taken by surprise. He went on his way without waiting for her; she caught him up.

They went down the rugged paths in silence.

"What's the matter? Are you tired?"

"No—not at all."

"Ill, then?"

"No, there's nothing at all the matter with me."

He was still a mystery to her, and she did not attempt to fathom him. They went into the house without another word.

. . . . . .

They spent the rest of the day uneasily trying to avoid one another's eyes. They were sitting opposite one another by the fire, which he poked from time to time. He was silent, but she could not resist making some commonplace remarks:

"You're a humbug," she would say.

And he shrugged his shoulders, without looking at her.

They dined, and she talked on, either to her Pekinese or to the old caretaker, the mere fact that one had nothing to say was not enough to prevent her from talking.

When they were going to bed, she said, as she had done every evening for a fortnight:

"I'm going upstairs. You'll come soon, won't you, dear?"

"Soon," he muttered.

When he was left alone, he threw a log on the fire, which was burning low. He covered his face with his hands, and tried to understand. He needed time. Upstairs, Germaine grew weary of waiting for him and fell asleep. He had the night before him: he would think it all out.

"Why is it that suddenly I don't love her? Had I never seen her before, with her big nose, her foolish mouth and her penciled eyebrows? I wanted to worship her like a statue, and then I realized that she was only a woman making herself up to fascinate, like the rest of them . . . a soulless creature. Soul? She doesn't need one. It was I who did all the talking about it . . . Since this morning, I've known that she was only a mannequin, and I've spent four years of my life worshiping my own illusion. Oh! and how jealous I was of those who wanted to take her from me!"

He shuddered and pulled himself together. Words came to him now that he saw clearly the brutal truth.

Alone in the mountains with his conquest, he had no more rivals to fear; and there in the morning sun, the mask had been drawn aside, showing the face that was nothing to him now that no one disputed his right to worship it.

How that dog had made a rush for the biscuits, when he thought he was going to lose them. . . .

"He's a wise dog . . . he likes other people's meals."

. . . . . .

When he went into her room at dawn, he saw that she had been crying.

He smiled bitterly, showing cruel teeth when he grasped the fact that she loved him.

"Ah, ah . . . it's my turn now. I'm going to give you the time you gave me."

As soon as she awoke, he was going to announce that they would return immediately to Paris. In Paris, she would suffer bitter remorse . . . she would suffer until she would seem to be in the clutches of a fatal disease.

He imagined her running after him, as he had run after her; wherever he went, she would be there, pleading, and people would whisper:

"She's after Calixte, the artist, you know?"

He took a step forward . . . and bent his head. It is sad not to be loved, but it is still more sad to have given up loving.

When he bent over her, she opened her eyes, and murmured:

"Oh, my love. . . !"

And it was the first time she had ever spoken the word. She leaned on his shoulder, sobbing.

Then taking her gently close to him he began to weep with her in despair.

SEPTEMBER ROSES

Robert Dieudonne

"And now give me peace, I want to talk to M. Dargelin."

Marise Vaujours took the author into the study.

Michel Dargelin took off his wintercoat, and put his hat on a peg.

"Well, what about it?"

Marise spread out the manuscript on the littered table.

"It's about this scene between the husband and wife. When she tells her husband that she loves no one but him, is she sincere?"

"Yes, of course she is. . . . She explains to him."

"Yes, I know that."

She bit her lip and paused.

"You know, I don't feel it rings true there."

Dargelin looked at the actress; his eyes were frank.

"Don't you?" he said.

"I know it's your play, and if you think it's right . . . but I'm a woman and I know that in real life, if I were in her position, I shouldn't speak like that."

"It's all a matter of temperament."

Marise shook her head.

"No, the truth is always the truth. She takes a lover at the end of the act, and you can't expect the public to swallow that. . . . just twenty minutes before."

"Why not? Love . . ."

Their eyes met; the woman smiled.

"Love," asked Marise. "You've often been in love?"

"No, not often, but. . . ."

"Would you like me to tell you?"

She stopped and went away from the table, but as she passed, the man caught her hand, and drew her towards him.

"Now, I wish. . . ."

"And the king said, 'It is our wish.' "

She seemed to be looking for something in the pages she was turning over.

"In any case, you love your wife. She is a charming woman."

(Heavens, how hot it was in that little room!)

"But you ought to have lived with a woman like me."

"Yes?"

There was a pause.

What could she be looking for so persistently in the manuscript. She threw it down onto the table.

"So she is sincere?"

His voice was scarcely audible when he said:

"And you? What do you think?"

She shrugged her shoulders and said:

"If you don't believe me."

He wondered why she spoke in this way.

"I don't understand . . ." he said.

She mocked him slightly saying:

"What do you want?"

He was afraid of speaking, because of the way she smiled at him. She might have meant anything.

Marise was sitting on the edge of the table, swinging her legs with their transparent silk stockings.

"Until to-morrow then . . ."

"If I were sure that you loved me a little . . ."

He bent to catch her hand which she yielded after a little hesitation.

"Leave me alone . . . it's so futile."

He moaned, and his voice sounded far off as he said, "Marise. . . ."

He stood up, and pressed her to him, kissing her hair.

Suddenly, she pulled herself up and said:

"We're mad!"

But she had not pronounced the three words before Michel put his lips against hers and silenced her.

. . . . . .

"Yes, my dear . . . he's the man for me . . . the one man."

Jane Portelet was listening to Marise's secrets. They were not the first she had heard, for Marise confided them all in her. Her duty as the elder of the two consisted in giving sensible advice, which was generally ignored.

Marise had never before been so serious:

"I love him."

"That's all he needed."

How was she to explain this strange passion?

"You've no idea what kind of man he is. He's got the soul of a child, and although he's a great writer, he has never lived. Believe it or not, as you like, for I know he has written stories of life, but it's true he's never lived. I saw that as soon as he began to speak. . . . He's a mere child!"

"All the same, he is fifty, if he's a day."

"Well, I'm forty."

"You needn't declare it from the house tops."

Marise was in a brown study, and she smiled wistfully:

"It's stupid, then, is it?"

"It's no use talking. What do you think you're going to do?"

"Whatever he wants me to do."

"If he has it in him to want anything."

Jane Portelet thought she ought to tell what she knew about Dargelin senior.

"Every one knows he never had any experience of life. He wrote piles of novels. . . . Have you read them?"

"Not yet . . ."

"You had better do so quickly to have something to talk about."

"Happily for him, his wife isn't such a fool as he is. After the play, she'll take him back to the country, and then good night. You don't think he's going to start getting mixed up with messes like that, at his age . . ."

"He's not rich."

"Well, what about it? I don't want anything from him."

Jane Portelet burst out laughing:

"Happily for him, his wife . . ."

But Marise interrupted her harshly:

"I'm not afraid of his wife. He would never hesitate between his wife and me . . ."

"What good's that to you?"

"I love him."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all."

She looked with annoyance at her friend.

"I have no ulterior motive. One day at a rehearsal I was watching him, but he didn't know it, and I never saw

a more frank, or a gentler face, and yet it's a face that shows he's got brains—you can read him like a book. . . . He hides nothing."

"Then there are no surprises in store for you."

"I don't mind what you say. I feel as though my past were a blank, and I am no more sure of myself than when I was first in love."

"You're in luck."

"I sent him some roses this morning."

"To his wife?"

"No, to him."

"Your scruples. . . ."

"He thanked me with tears in his eyes."

"That's a good beginning."

"Listen, Jane, and don't make fun of me. You are the only friend I can talk to. It's only recently I got rid of my friend. I couldn't stand him any longer. . . ."

"Bravo!"

"Honestly, I could bear it no longer. He . . ."

She paused, for she was afraid of appearing ridiculous.

"He is?"

"He is probably the one man for me in my life."

"It's time you found him."

The servant came into the room.

"Just a moment . . ."

Marise took down the telephone receiver.

"Trudaine 83-41."

Jane Portelet powdered her nose before the little mirror in her handbag.

"Trudaine 83-41—M. Dargelin? Alone? It's nothing serious . . . I only wanted to hear your voice . . . to tell you . . . I'm thinking about you. You don't believe

me? I've been cutting out a photograph of you. I found it in an old copy of *l'Illustration*. No, I'm not going out. When can I expect to see you?"

She paused a moment.

"Au revoir . . . dearest . . . until to-morrow."

She hung up the receiver with a weary gesture.

"Anyhow, you don't fall in love with babes in the cradle," said Jane Portelet.

. . . . . .

"I shan't be in to dinner to-night," Michel Dargelin said, with his eyes fixed on his plate.

Marthe Dargelin looked at him in astonishment.

"Where are you going then?"

"I'm going to have dinner with Marise Vaujours. She invited me. . . ."

"To her house?"

"Yes, I want to re-write a scene. . . ."

"Can't you work at home?"

"She must explain to me what she wants . . ."

"Ah, she is working with you. . . ."

Marthe Dargelin pouted a little.

"She could have come here."

"To dinner?"

"I didn't reckon of having to receive Mlle. Vaujours here, but if it is essential . . ."

When she was thirty, Marthe Dargelin had married Michel, who was twelve years her senior. She loved him in a prosaic, motherly way. She was proud of him, because he was a great man, and she looked after him like a child. She had a tranquil face and good features, but her eyes were rather wistful.

Michel was hers entirely, he withheld nothing, for he

loved her as an essential part of his life. He could not imagine life without Marthe. His affection for her was deep and real, but he did not try to analyze it, for life seemed simple and straightforward, until he sat down to create beings who would only unfold themselves word by word, slowly, unsurely. But he kept his own life and his own personality apart from these creatures of his imagination.

He loved the flowers in his garden, the countryside, and tame animals.

Sometimes, when he was rather tired, he would lay his head on Marthe's shoulder and whisper:

"You're a dear soul."

She would clasp him in her arms.

When they lived in Paris during the winter, she only went out to pay the most essential calls, and then she seemed in a hurry to return to their lovely little home, where their intimacy was perfect.

"Yesterday, the Holbois were talking about Marise Vaujours."

Michel tried to appear indifferent.

"What did they say?"

"That she wasn't the right woman to interpret your character."

He flushed.

"So those fools think they know my play, do they?"

"They had been told. . . ."

"Don't worry me with all that. . . ."

"Don't whine about it."

"What's it got to do with them?"

"They don't know your play, but they do know Mlle. Vaujours."

She remarked, as though it were quite an insignificant piece of information:

"She was Ternin's friend."

"What does that matter to them? Is she responsible to them?"

"It's through him she got engagements. When she got what she wanted she let him down."

Michel Dargelin wanted to control his anger.

"And then . . . but it isn't true."

"What I tell you is. . . ."

"Oh, yes, yes, those wretches have always been down on Mlle. Vaujours. What have you against her?"

"Nothing! Only I'm rather surprised you accepted her invitation, for you never do. . . ."

"Oh, I'm not free . . . that's it, is it? I thought as much. I've got to give an account of myself to you, have I? When Mlle. Vaujours invited me, I ought to have said before accepting, 'Pardon me, but I must ask my wife's permission.' "

"You are free to do as you like, and be as foolish as you please."

Michel Dargelin threw his serviette on the table as he rose.

"I've had enough of it. I'm weary of all this. If I can't look after myself at my age . . ."

She asked him calmly:

"What's the matter with you?"

"I'm not going to be tied to your apron-strings."

"Have I not even the right of knowing who sent you those flowers?"

He could find no satisfactory explanation, so he said feebly:

"She knows I love roses."

She was silent for a moment, and she looked at him sadly.

"Ah, the theater!"

"What about it, the theater?"

"It's always the same . . . The same story, while men fall into the snares of such women . . ."

"Those women have more brains than the prosy homely specimens who know nothing of life!"

Marthe did not mention her rival's name.

"She will cast you aside as she has done the others."

"I forbid you to speak about a woman you don't know."

"That proves you know little enough about her, or else you wouldn't forbid me to speak of her."

"If you do, so much . . ."

He stopped suddenly.

"You were about to say?"

"So much the worse for you."

He went out banging the door.

Before going to the rehearsal, he dressed with unusual care, then went to the hairdresser's and had his fingernails polished. He gazed at his face in the mirror, and took the brush to smooth his wavy gray hair.

He thought of nothing but himself and Marise, and when he saw her at the rehearsal, he kissed her passionately, as they stood in the shadow behind a door.

. . . . . .

When they were sitting opposite one another at table, they scarcely knew what to say.

The servant was moving to and fro, changing the plates and pouring out drinks. When she turned her

back, they exchanged insignificant remarks and threw kisses to one another.

Marise had coffee served in a little salon. She lay stretched on a divan, piled up with cushions.

The maid lit the lamps and prepared liquors.

"Madame wants nothing else?"

"No, but see to it that I am left in peace. If any one rings up, say I'm not here."

At last the maid went out.

Michel, who had been standing by the fireplace, came nearer to Marise, and said:

"I thought she would never go out."

"You're like a boy of twenty, dear."

"It's you who have made me young again."

"Are you sure that's true?"

He wanted to kiss her, but she restrained him gently.

"Please, do be sensible now . . . because of . . . of the servants."

"Your lips, please."

"And after, will you promise to be sensible?"

The kiss was a long one, for Michel bent over the divan, with one knee on it, and held Marise in his arm, while she clasped and unclasped her hands nervously.

Suddenly she released herself.

"I don't want you to think that I am giving myself to you just for the moment, or in a haphazard way. . . . I'm offering you myself wholly . . . without any reservation, I'm giving you my whole life. We mustn't spoil our first love. It's not only desire that drives us into one another's arms, there is something more earnest and powerful. . . ."

"It's love," he whispered.

"I'm not asking you for any vow or promise . . . You can do what you like with me. . . ."

He was sitting near her, in a state of rapture and bliss. She offered him her lips, and murmured softly, while he clasped her.

And in spite of her resolution not to yield as quickly to him as she had done to so many others on the cushions of this little salon, she was carried away by passion, for their love was stronger than their reason.

Before long, the servant knocked at the door.

"Come in."

"Monsieur wants to tell Madame that he will wait for her at the Abbaye at midnight."

When the maid went out, Michel Dargelin said softly:

"I shall have to go."

"Ah, yes . . . your wife! . . ."

He smiled sadly.

"Your friend. . . ."

She shook the cushions mechanically, and put them back in place.

"Oh, Life . . ." she said.

He drank a glass of liquor.

"Until to-morrow . . ."

. . . . . .

Michel Dargelin's play was not enthusiastically received.

The critics did not spare him, for they resented the intrusion of a novelist in the theater. The unanimous opinion was that Marise Vaujours played the part like a goose, whereas it ought to have been interpreted with dignity and understanding.

The actress's lover was hurt, for his self-respect had had an unpleasant jar.

"I told you the fellow was a wash-out."

Marthe Dargelin was anxious to console her husband, but she set about it in the worst possible way.

"I told you she'd make a mess of your play."

So many things like this ought to have separated the friends, but, instead, it drew them nearer together.

The writer said:

"Don't trouble about what those wretches say. You have played the part as I wanted it played. I ought to ask you to forgive me for making a mistake. They're all fools . . . it doesn't matter what they say."

They were staying at the time in a big station hotel; and Michel flushed uncomfortably every time he booked one room and paid for it. The hotel manager warned Michel respectfully that he was going to let the empty room.

The following day Michel rang up Marise, and said in a trembling voice:

"I simply must see you."

"Come to me then."

He came and a mist dimmed his golden brown eyes.

"My wife insists on our going to the country without delay."

"Aren't you the master?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"There's no but about it, either you stay with me or you go."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Stay."

He hesitated and shook his head, for he was only a poor

human being, although he was a great writer, and he dared not say how much he was suffering.

"After what I've done for you," said Marise.

Then he slipped down onto his knees, took her hands and covered them with kisses.

"It's you I want, you!" And he added:

"I'm very unhappy."

"You've nothing to reproach me with. If you asked me to give up my friend I shouldn't hesitate."

He raised his eyes, and looked at her in astonishment.

"Is that true? Is it true?"

"Since I say so, it is."

He stood up, looking down as though engrossed in thought.

"I've nothing much to offer you, for I'm quite poor. You live in luxury . . . and I can't guarantee that. . . ."

"Do you really think that weighs with me?"

"I can't ask you to sacrifice your luxury and ease . . . no, I can't do it."

"Because you don't trust me!"

"Oh, Marise. . . ."

"Women ask for money only from men who have nothing else to give, but as for you? . . . When a woman is loved by a man like you, what more can she ask?"

"But the life. . . ."

"That doesn't matter."

She was not agitated, she seemed to be reserving her energies for a battle, of which she anticipated the victory without any hesitation. She was sincere, and she had good reasons for wishing to conquer. She was not looking ahead into the future; she simply wanted her

triumph straightway. She sacrificed her former friend as easily as Michel Dargelin's wife. A few minutes earlier, she had formed no definite plan, but she could not bear the idea of Michel giving way to Marthe, and going away with her. Had she made him love her so much in vain? After it all, could he leave her because he was told to? He was like a frightened child obeying some one in authority.

"If you don't love me enough . . ."

"To do what?"

"To go away. . . ."

"With you?"

"Yes."

. . . . . .

Jane Porelet found Marise busy packing her trunks.

"You're going away?"

"With Michel."

"You're not?"

"I tell you I am."

Jane did not enter into futile remonstrances. She simply remarked in a quiet way:

"It's not worth the trouble of taking so much stuff with you. You'll be back within a week."

Marise looked at her in disgust; at that moment she hated her.

. . . . . .

At half-past seven, Marise had not arrived at the station buffet. Dargelin could scarcely bear the strain. He rose, walked up and down, rushed to the gate, came back to his place, and snubbed the hotel waiter who wanted his order.

At a quarter to eight, a young thickset man came into the room frowning. He saw Michel and came towards him. "You are Monsieur Dargelin, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am."

The other man introduced himself:

"I am Philippe Herbelot. . . .You've heard of me?"

"That means . . . ?"

"Yes, I've come to tell you that it's of no use waiting for Mlle. Vaujours. She won't be coming."

Dargelin felt as though he had fallen into a great pit. He became pale and stammered:

"Why?"

"Because I arrived when she was packing and let her know that she was not to go."

Philippe Herbelot did not seem a bad sort, but he lacked refinement.

Michel groaned.

"Oh, Lord . . . what now?"

The other man was playing with his gloves. He suddenly drew a chair and sat down in front of the writer, who could not help recoiling.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid. I've a horror of scandal, and I've not come here to pick quarrels with you. I could have left you to wait here, but I preferred to come and tell you myself. What has passed between Marise and you?"

"Ah, she has told you. . . ."

Herbelot shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm a fixture. Anyhow, it's not the first."

"Ah!"

It was like a sob choking the man's throat.

"You thought you were the first, did you?"

"I implore you. . . ."

"You must have had some nice illusions. With a woman like Marise, it's mad to demand too much, for she can't keep her faith with any one."

Michel whispered softly, ever so softly:

"Then why did you stop her from leaving?"

"Partly for myself, partly for you."

"Really? . . ."

He heard a wretched jeer.

"You don't believe me? You're worth better treatment than that. You think I can't explain it to you. But all the same, a man like you ought to have more sense. I don't know what I'll be doing when I'm your age, but I don't think I'll be taken in. . . ."

Michel was afraid of asserting what he firmly believed.

"But she loved me!"

"Listen," said Philippe, "I'm going to ask you on your word of honor not to see Marise again."

"And if I refuse?"

"So much the worse for you."

Philippe rose and threw a letter on the table.

"There's a note for you."

With trembling hands, the older man put on his glasses and tore the envelope. There were five lines, five paltry lines: that was all that remained of their great love.

"My Dear,

I realize that it is wrong of me to spoil your life. We were not acting wisely, for we had not reflected enough. Above all, don't grieve over it! It is the

wisest solution, and I am sure you will understand.

Don't bear any grudge against me, do try to understand.

Yours very sincerely,
MARISE VAUJOURS."

Dargelin looked up. He was defeated.

"Very well . . . I understand."

He tried to stand up, but swayed so that Philippe caught him in his arms.

"Do you want me to put you in the car?"

"No, . . . no, leave me alone."

He went out, weary and staggering, and still carrying a little bag in his hand.

. . . . . .

He went to the hotel where he had been with Marise for he did not know any others. He was in the very room where they had been together, but he dared not ask for another room, because of the explanations he might have to give to the waiter. Wherever he was, he was borne down by the weight of his misery.

He dropped into an armchair, and began to reflect, but he could not connect his scattered thoughts. Tears were flowing down his face. . . .

Suddenly he thought of Marthe; of Marthe who must have been at that same time suffering the same misery. At first, he thought of going back to her, but then he would have to explain why he returned and he would have to tell the dreary story of their love. He felt weak, too weak to face the ordeal of talking of his sorrow.

To-morrow, to-morrow. . . .

When the underground trains passed, the whole house shook, and the glasses tinkled. He heard the horns of

cars passing outside in the dark, then gradually it became quieter and quieter, until there was nothing to be heard, but the gurgle of water bubbling in syphons. In the next room, a murmur of voices, moans, mingled sighs and then stealthy footsteps on the linoleum. . . .

Lovers!

As though in a dream, he saw Marise's form. . . .

Marise shaking her short hair; she was leaning towards him—he had only to bend forward to kiss her . . . He moaned as though he were in physical agony. Dawn crept into the chill room. He seemed to be drowsy. . . .

. . . . . .

"Ah, Monsieur. . . ."

The concierge could only stammer a few words.

"What a tragedy, what a tragedy."

A policeman went up the stairs before him, the door of his flat was open.

The policeman turned towards him.

"What do you want here?"

"I am at home."

The policeman took off his hat.

"Ah, it's you. . . . I beg your pardon. No one knew where to find you."

"What's the matter?"

The policeman tried to find a way of breaking the news gently.

"It's because . . . because . . . your wife turned on the gas in the bathroom."

"Well . . . go on. . . ."

His teeth chattered, and his face was a grayish green hue.

"When your servant came this morning she found her. . . ."

"Dead?"

The policeman could only answer with a feeble nod.

He staggered into a room where there was a smell of gas. Marthe was lying stretched out on the bed; he went towards her, and stretched out his arms, trying to speak. He fell down on his knees.

"There is a letter for you," the policeman said.

He looked at the envelope in a stupefied way.

"A letter. . . ."

His hands trembled as he tore it open.

"I have no grudge against you. Good-by."

He stared at the stiff form on the bed and he was as pale as though he were on the point of death.

They dragged him away from the room. Various people arrived, some friendly, some curious, some indifferent.

He sat before his desk repeating:

"She is dead! . . . she is dead!"

. . . . . .

Marise was stupefied when she heard the news.

She did not know what to do to show her sympathy for Michel. Jane Portelet rang him up.

"Ask her to come to see me."

She came in the evening and went into his study. Dargelin was standing up, dry-eyed. He seemed to have shrunk. She stretched her hands towards him in pity, but he shook his head.

"Why did we do it?" he said. "Why?"

"I love you."

"Yes . . . love! What is called love!"

In the salon, the undertakers were struggling to put the coffin on trestles.

THE MADMAN

Olivier Duchemin

"Here we are at last," said James Forst as he looked at his watch. "What disgusting weather!"

It was raining hard, and the countryside looked dismal under a gray sky. Even the streams were a muddy brown after the rain, as they flowed between hills and rocks covered with heather and lichen. "Not too bad all the same," thought the traveler.

"Ah, some houses here. I wonder whether it's here." The train climbed a barren slope; suddenly James saw nothing but a blue green moor that stretched away into the thick mist in the distance. He was rather disappointed but he still had the letter from Edward Story, his old friend.

". . . Do come and spend a few days with me, for I am horribly lonely in this old house. We can do a little shooting on the moors, and talk of Oxford days. Sounds rather dull. . . ." James was meditating when grinding and shrieking the Edinburgh train stopped.

When he got out, the engine seemed like a great monster emitting brown smoke, which was rather overdoing it, on such a dreary day. . . . Edward Story was already before him, as gushing as ever. "Poor old James, as little and thin as usual," thought Edward.

Without realizing it, they spoke in the old familiar way, asking one another questions.

"Any plans? London for a change? What kind of journey?"

Then James: "The country doesn't look too cheerful, does it? I say who are those people? Just look, they're bound."

"Yes, they are madmen. It's nothing. You'll see, it's more inviting over there."

While they were talking, the two friends came to the old carriage which looked as though it were about to fall to pieces, nevertheless it retained some traces of its lordly appearance. They set off, and they were followed by a big brake with the madmen in it. The most rational was sitting with the warder beside the coachman; and James often turned and saw the hollow-eyed madman who would not put his hat on. At a turn in the road, however, the heavy wagon was lost to sight, but behind a three-story house. It looked odd and dilapidated, and on the plate was the name "The Farland House." "That's the asylum," said Edward as he drew the reins. The horse trotted on, steaming in the fast rain. There was a chill mist rising from the moors, and all was still but for the slight monotonous dripping of the rain in the grass. They passed a muddy pond, with reeds standing above the surface, and a wild duck rose with a piercing cry. As they went on, James followed the monotonous rut made by the wheels along the winding road. The mist was thickening, but after some clearings in the moor, he saw Edward's house; it stood on the top of a hill and looked old and low in the twilight. The dogcart stopped and they went into a yard where a rough-haired dog was barking.

There was a square tower between the two sides of the building, but Edward said that it was so cracked that

no one dared to climb it. On the left, there was a high building, with some Gothic features and broken window spaces which looked out onto a circular wall around the house. It was all that remained of the old manor. On the right were the farm, brick buildings, and at the foot of the tower, was a low door opening into a vaulted room, which had only one window for light. This room connected the two wings of the building. The general effect of the place was not pleasing; it seemed too remote, too isolated, and the desolation, the great age of the walls and the lack of harmony gave the guest an unfavorable impression. Once he was shown to his room in the left wing, James sat on the bed and said with a sigh:

"So long as I'm not ill here, it won't be too bad."

By an absurd coincidence, he broke his leg the next day, while hunting. And that very evening, his friend was called away to Edinburgh to attend to an urgent matter which would take some days.

There was only one doctor in the district and he was the one belonging to the asylum. He came to attend to James.

When his leg was put into plaster, James had only one source of distraction: the moor. For hours he used to watch the dim-colored moor, the slate-gray sky and the pale clouds that crossed it, until in his weakness, he could have believed that they were shrouds, and the yews were standing sadly in the fine rain, in a funeral procession. It fascinated him to watch the clouds that were forever passing across the sky; gray clouds with traits of red-brown, heaped upon one another mingling their somber shades and uniting them in a gust of wind, then they would be torn asunder, like great loose scarves with folds

trailing behind them. The sickly rays of the sun did not brighten the dreariness of the gray prospect, where the hues never changed. In his fever, James could see nothing but the window, and it seemed to frame a vast world peopled by shadowy dream creatures. Days passed. The country seemed crazy, clouds in the sky were mad, the servants jeered in a senile way, and James perceived that he was the prey of a morbid disease. He was haunted by the vacant look on the madman's face in the wagon, that dread face with its hollow eyes, and pupils as small as a pinhead.

One evening, as James was looking through the window at the dismal horizon, a storm began to rumble in the distance and the yew trees were sighing, sighing. The old servant said that a madman had escaped that morning. James was depressed. The room was growing darker and darker and there was no light as yet. He looked at the storm outside on the moor . . . the harsh lightning, and he heard the roars of thunder. The moor looked ghostly; what was the moving thing to the left of that single yew? Was it only the wind howling? It was like the voice of a condemned man, who waits in his misery until he is exhausted, and then begins again in hoarse tortured voice, more sinister than before. James lay still in his plaster cage; he was afraid. He felt that something was coming nearer, nearer, by the wall, then under the window. Would no one ever come to save him! Oh, the terror of that voice! He rang desperately, but the sound of the little bell seemed so feeble compared with the awful roar of thunder and the din of the storm. There was no answer. The old house seemed to be deserted; the wind howled and whistled in the corridors, and the very

foundations seemed to shake. Doors were banging, and James knew that some one, something was climbing up the wall. A bright flash showed a face outside the window pane . . . Terrible clap of thunder and in the inky night, something knocked up against the window pane. Then James saw for a moment the face of the madman who wouldn't put his hat on. . . .

And out there in the lashing rain, and the howling wind, there was a face tortured, grimacing . . . and two hands twisting as though in anguish. Hypnotized, James watched it. Each flash showed two vacant eyes staring at him. The madman seemed to call him, to fascinate him. Oh, would no one come, would no one come soon! But there was no answer, save the storm and this terrifying face in the dark.

And James shrieked, like a beast being slaughtered.

And when the servant came at last, he found a twisted form on the chair, facing the madman outside the window, and heard a voice gurgling, roaring, shrieking: "Farland House, Farland House. . . ."

THE THOUSAND AND ONE MORNINGS

Henry Duvernois

THE FOOTLIGHTS

Monsieur Lepierval would like to speak to the director. He says that it's confidential and it certainly looks as if it were.

The director jumped and that made the stage manager leap high in the air just as he was in the midst of recording all the misfortunes of the afternoon. Little Miclozure had the grippe, was unable to sing and wanted to speak her songs from a distance with orchestra accompaniment; one of the chorus girls had slipped on the polished floor of the Apollo Gallery and had just confided her right ankle to the tender mercies of a masseur; Folligny, the star, was leaving for Rambouillet to look for her husband who had left his house and home as the result of a violent discussion. Without doubt tragedy was hovering on the horizon.

"I've got it in for Lepierval," howled the director. "It's partly my fault. I am too weak. I am too good. Write this down: 'Chorus girls are forbidden to visit the Louvre Museum. If they must be educated I'll tell them about the Winged Victory, the Venus de Milo, the Mona Lisa, the crown jewels and all the rest of that trash! As for Folligny, send some one after her. I tolerate a married

star only on condition that she takes no advantage of her married state. And that chit, Miclozure will sing, or I miss my guess. She's raving! Her dream is to be at the Odéon and she wants to show what she can do with poetry. As for that young Lepierval, leave him to me. I'll take charge of him. That fellow has a nerve after what he did last night! Death only could have excused him. He isn't dead, but he'll soon wish he were."

The stage manager left, young Lepierval appeared, and the director put on an air of great amiability.

"Come in, Monsieur Lepierval, and sit down. You don't mind this weather? No? That is fine! I'm delighted to see you looking so well. As for the Revue to which you condescend to lend your talents, I am bound to tell you that your outrageous behavior threatened its success. Where do you think you are, Monsieur Lepierval? What do you take me for? Hangers-on of your type . . . Just allow me to tell you what I think of them. . . ."

The "hanger-on" started to protest: "But indeed I understand. And it's not to the director I make my confession, but to the man . . ."

"I recognize that line. Authors, when they want to burden me with their stuff, pretend to address themselves not to the director, but to a Mæcenas. Decorators see in me only the artist. Those higher up beg me to act as administrator. The ladies of the company take me for a father confessor. No one wants the director. Go ahead, sir, the man listens to you. What happened last night? Were you drunk? Did you faint at the last minute? Perhaps you played poker and forgot you were playing in my theater? Or, as it was raining, you thought you'd stay

at home? Speak! Find some excuse. That would astonish me. I'll tell you anyhow without any beating about the bush, that you're perfectly free to look for another job more suited to your artist's soul. . . . Fire ahead!"

Lepierval collected his wits. "Ah, I knew that you would be angry," he sighed. "I ask you to put yourself, for one moment, in my place. Here I am in the rôle of a hero, but what a hero! A hero ashamed and despairing. Dear Director, my pals must have told you that they saw me arriving last night at eight o'clock. I go on at half-past nine, but I need some time for make-up and change of costume. At a quarter past nine I left my dressing-room as usual to go to stage box Number 3, where I open the scene in the theater between Maud Frotin and me. Maud was in one of the opposite boxes."

"That's right. You disappeared at a quarter past nine. Were you kidnapped?"

"No, sir, that is, yes, I mean yes and no. As it was only the second performance of our Revue the usher, new to her job, wasn't in her place. You know how carefully those scenes in the audience have to be managed. Just enough and not too much has to be shown. Fortunately, stage box Number 1 was open, I climbed into it and stayed during the prologue, going over in my mind my first responses and the couplet:

"Silent quite I should be
As to adultery. . . ."

At about nine twenty-five, I heard the sound of a passkey in the lock, and the usher showed in two ladies. . . ."

"Two 'déclassées.' "

"No, sir, a lady and a young girl belonging to the upper middle classes of Normandy. . . ."

"We mean by 'déclassées' members of the audience who have paid for two seats but who have been put in a box to keep it from remaining empty. Don't you know even that much?"

"Well, to continue . . . the usher showed in this lady and this young girl, saying, 'you'll be very comfortable here and not a cent more to pay. It's a favor from the box office. I see there's already a gentleman here. That doesn't matter. He'll be glad to sit at the back of the box. And the ladies will be so kind as not to forget a little tip for me.' I got up and was beginning to assure the ladies that I would need only a corner where I couldn't be seen and that I would ask them to leave me a passageway for about two minutes. All of a sudden the young girl cried:

"Ah, Monsieur Pierre!" adding, "Why, Mother, it's the son of Monsieur Estibié!"

"Yes, I was indeed the son of Monsieur Estibié and, my dear Director, I can assure you I saw Madame Chorut-Vandellé and her daughter, Jacqueline. . . . That doesn't mean anything to you. But to me! We are from the same part of the country. The Chorut-Vandellés and I. The reason I decided to try my fortune in Paris as an actor was because six months ago Madame Chorut-Vandellé refused to let me marry her daughter.

"The curtain was falling, on the prologue. I put as good a face as possible on our unexpected meeting, and I found Madame Chorut-Vandellé in anything but a good humor.

" 'What in the world have you been doing with yourself?' she began. 'Your parents even didn't know what had become of you. At least, I am glad to find you looking well. You must be astonished to see me here with

Jacqueline. It was raining cats and dogs. Our hotel was two steps from this theater. We were assured that the revue was a very decent one. That is that the men were at least all dressed respectably even if the women didn't wear many clothes. And anyhow, we are living in the city now and "In Rome must do as the Romans do." '

"As for Jacqueline. She was still angry with me. She turned her back so as to hide the tears in her eyes, tears of joy, tears of surprise. Finally, the music began again and there's nothing like music to soften a woman's anger and to make her regret the past. So Jacqueline slid up to me, squeezed my hand and whispered, 'I am so glad to see you again and especially to see that you are alone. They have slandered you. I'll explain later.'

"You may imagine my state of mind, dear Director. The first act was beginning, Miclozure and Boscard were singing Lohengrin and the chorus girls were dancing. The fateful moment drew nearer. Madame Chorut-Vandellé, engrossed in the play and already slightly influenced in my favor, left us alone in the enchanting darkness. My dear Jacqueline squeezed my hand, dropped it for a moment, then took it again in hers. I would have had to get up, snatch my hand from the clasp of the girl I loved, stand beside Madame Chorut-Vandellé and reveal to them that I were an actor. It would have cost me my most cherished dream. Still, I might have done it . . . but you know the rôle I had to play. Actors who are successful never want to play a duped husband part, so it is always given to a newcomer. And my lines were 'Whom do I see down there in that box? Heavens, my wife! It is Juliette with my best friend!' I pass hurriedly over the rest which includes the little philosophical couplet

with a Charleston chorus. Suffice it to say that I shouldn't face it. I kept quiet. I committed a crime against Art. Fortunately, Maud Frotin didn't lose her head. 'Whom do I see down there?' she cried, 'My husband! He's sure to cause a scandal! Let's creep away without his seeing us.'

"Undoubtedly, the result hung for a moment in the balance. We were all scared, but we got a good laugh from the audience. I owed you this explanation. I don't ask you to approve of my action, but to excuse it. The happiness of my life hung in the balance. I left with Madame Chorut-Vandellé and her daughter after the first act. Because really, after all, the second act for a young girl from the Provinces was hardly . . . I am going to be married. I'll take a job in a concern that manufactures chemical products. Madame Chorut-Vandellé was very kind to me. As for Jacqueline, the adorable, she said to me: 'Monsieur Pierre, I know that it's the fashion here in Paris, and please promise me that after we're married you'll never make up your face any more.' "

THE FIRST DISAPPEARANCE OF JEROME BARDINI

Jean Girardoux

A horse and cart passed at a good pace, and Bardini, who had been asleep, opened his eyes.

"That'll be the mail man," he thought. "He's sure to take to a gallop on the bridge."

And indeed, he heard the horse gallop, and then stop suddenly.

"I suppose Barouzet has stopped him," Bardini reflected, "wants to sell him some game, most likely, but it'll only be quails. He'll be off again directly."

There was a breeze, and the weathercock was creaking.

"Weathercock creaking . . . that means a south wind," thought Bardini.

It was the last time he would wake up in this house; and Bardini tried in vain to see something different or to hear some unusual sound which would prove that this was the day of the great adventure.

For Jerôme Bardini was not fated to continue any longer his calling in life as Registrar. The Angelus rang and everything went on as usual; the same sun shone on the same humdrum world one day after another, and Bardini wished in vain that he could make the beginning of this day somehow different from every other day. He began badly by following his habit of putting his left foot

on the floor first, just where the mark of his daily rising was as plain as the track of a wolf in a cage!

He opened the shutters, and saw the dawn over the countryside. But to him it was not the countryside, it was the monotonous exhibition of trees, fields and villages and there was not a single detail connected with them unknown to him. He knew the owner of every house he could see, and he knew exactly not only how much money, but also how much sympathy and kindly feeling he could find in each of these owners. From his window, he could see the whole vista of the Seine in its early course; it rose just the same day after day, but this was the last time he would see its daily performance.

"That's for to-day!" he thought.

But his thoughts went back to the day before, and the day before that, to the post and to the associations recalled by what he saw from his window. Time and space work together to baffle a man who tries to get away from himself, and Bardini's mind was so preoccupied with these thoughts that he had recourse to words to relieve his mind.

"That's for to-day . . ." he said, aloud. He was right. He turned towards the window, so as not to awaken his wife, and went on talking:

"It's all over, all over . . ."

He began to think of his attack on the unknown in the light of a veritable assault. He dressed himself and shaved more carefully than usual, for he did not want to embark on a new period in his career without cleansing all traces of the old life. He even did some physical exercises. His wife would have been glad to see him do so for she often told him that he was letting himself grow

old and rusty. She wanted to imitate him in everything. But the sight of his wife struggling to repeat the same exercises, to say, time after time, the same eternal sentences more and more vigorously was more than he could bear, and he smashed the instruments of torture. He took it into his head that he wanted the best food and plenty of it, lest in the near future he should be faced by starvation. Then again, Renée imitated him. She began dosing herself with phosphorine and various patent medicines, lest she should come up against want—she whose life was monotonous and never changing!

He gave it up. . . . During the three weeks that had elapsed since he decided to remove, his wife had done her best to kindle all the associations that he was striving to wipe out, and even the baby profited by the new crazes. Renée's mimicry transformed the pretenses of her husband into sheer hypocrisy, and he could have wept over it. For a week, Bardini suffered the tortures of indecision; he wrote out his statements badly, and could lay his hand on nothing that he wanted. There was a perceptible change in his handwriting, and that might be taken as a good sign in a man who wants to change his personality. On the other hand, Renée, who was acting as substitute during the chief clerk's holidays, made no errors, and her writing was almost legible, and this was no little event in her life.

All the memories of the past clung to the one, while they faded away in the mind of the other. . . . Bardini left the window, and turned to look at his wife. She had slipped into the middle of the bed after her husband had got up. He looked at her for a long time as he had looked at the view from the window, and he experienced the

same regret and the same satisfaction. He had been so certain that men and life would take on a new aspect this fatal morning, but everything was as usual. Renée was sleeping just the same as though nothing was going to happen; at least, her husband felt sure of it, although her eyes were closed. There was nothing different, nothing new: it was all humdrum, and the newest creature in the house, the child, what of him? He would see him presently.

Bardini went to take his bath, and his happiness seemed to justify his behavior, for the struggle was over, the long struggle against conventions and habits, and he would take no memory of them with him. He felt his burden grow lighter, as he stood rubbing himself with some new soap he had bought the previous day, with as much interest as Renée devoted to the selection of the creams and pastes that cemented their union. He washed his hands clean of the past. He sat down naked on the chair, lay naked on the floor, and reveled in thé fact that he had no beauty to care for. Then he spent some hours in putting his clothes on again, but he left aside his waistcoat, just as he did when he was on the way to the baths. He felt reassured for he had dreaded that he should feel weary of his own body, weary of being always himself.

That would have been discouraging, for it would have given him to believe that he was suffering simply from neurasthenia, and not from excessive ambition and a longing to change the direction of his life. Just now, when he had looked at himself in the mirror, nothing could have been more fresh to him than his own eyes or his own teeth. He was not going away in the company of the treacherous and feeble companion of sick men. His new

life would come suddenly upon him, as suddenly as his own reflection had appeared in the mirror. But it was a pity that the mirror called up memories; memories of his marriage and of the days before his marriage. He had shaved himself on his wedding-day, and on the first day of his married life—and now, he was shaving for the last time in his married life!

He went into his office, opened the shutters, and spread his papers on the table.

He enjoyed performing these daily acts for the last time. It was the last time the shutter would creak as he drew it aside. He began thinking again of his wife. It was a pity he was leaving her when there was no one in the house, for the servants and clerks were on holiday. He knew he would be judged the more harshly on that account, but he was not to be disturbed by such a consideration as that. He felt as though he were a stray passer-by spending a chance hour in a house where he had no responsibility. He wrote a letter of resignation to the Director and signed it. It was the last time he would sign his true name and he traced it so carefully that it scarcely looked like a signature, and had nothing characteristic in it. He was rather ashamed of having written such a commonplace letter to his wife. Every scrap of emotion and imagination seemed to have left him, perhaps they would be rekindled when he put on the new clothes that he had left in a hollow tree by the river, where they could not possibly form any associations with his previous life. He completed some office work, and counted the cash for the last time. He was most astonished to discover that the work which had always seemed so soul destroying as to be the motive of his resolution appeared

comparatively interesting. The postman came, and for the last time he received letters connected with the phase of his life that was closing.

The number of letters was unusually large. Fate seemed to have wind of his intentions. He wondered whether he would tear them up without reading them and looked at the envelopes: from his cousin; one of mother's friends; a wine merchant, and one in a strange handwriting. Who could be so inconsiderate as to want to enter into Bardini's life, on the very last day of it? After all, it would be more honorable to read them, and fulfill his obligations to the very end. His cousin had just had a son: so the world that Bardini was leaving would not be uninhabited in the future. His Mother's friend, a widow, wanted advice about her income and investments. She knew no one else who could advise her, and she believed Bardini would save her from ruin. He answered each letter before opening the next, as though he were a sick man on the point of death. Hé sent the old lady financial secrets, which were the result of twenty years' experience and he thought of Lazare who had come out of the grave to give a hint to an old friend. The wine merchant recommended him a Medoc that would be fine in ten years and—as though he suspected the truth—another that would be good within a year. That was not enough to keep Bardini back, and he took up the last letter. The address was written by a woman; the letter was on parchment, and the writer did not know him well, for she had put a "t" in Bardini. He fingered it, and tried in vain to bring himself to tear it up without reading it. It was strongly scented, and he did not trust a mysterious message, that the hypocritical Dame Fortune

was sending perhaps in order to keep him enslaved in boredom.

He opened it. The letter was from a cousin of Renée's, Maud de Frazier, who was coming to France for the first time from Mauritius, and she would like to take lunch on the following day with Renée and her husband. The danger was a day too late and Bardini breathed freely again. . . .

Renée slept late. It was just like her. She would sleep serenely on the day of her death, and she was losing precious moments of her last day with the husband she worshiped. The child was awake early and he was crying. It was the last time he would cry before he would be fatherless. Bardini tried to appease him, so that he should not wake Renée, and for the first time he took the child in his arms and felt his warm tears on his hand. The child smiled at his father and remained quite still. He was not shedding tears of despair or sorrow, for the grief of a child changes into happiness in a moment. When the tears fell they were salt like those of a grown-up person, and Bardini reflected that maybe the child would only cause him bitterness and regret; and he felt a coward, not because of the happiness he was giving up, but because of the unhappiness this child might bring about. . . . The child was naked as though he too were ready for the great adventure in search of liberty, and in his deep eyes the eyes of generations of Bardinis and de Fraziers shone and mingled, washed clear of all dust by the tears he had shed.

His little hand made the gesture characteristic of the Bardinis with thumb and first finger open, and the other fingers closed. His father remembered that the greatest

difficulty had been experienced in making the members of the Bardini family cross their hands when they were dead. Family resemblances showed in every line of his face, and even of his body, although Bardini had not seen any of the family naked. The mold of his face recalled his mother's and already, in this unformed being, the gums showed infallible signs of longevity. The child wore Renée's sweet and tranquil expression. He had his father's hair already . . . so this was the one fated to follow the official career of the Bardinis in spite of his father's insolvency. This was the being, who had never yet spoken a word, but whose cries recalled the tones of the family voices, to whom Bardini left all he no longer needed: money, tastes, the portrait of the Colonel Bardini whom Napoléon had loved; he too would inherit the de Frazier's talents for drawing room comedy and the Lacoste's taste for eighteenth-century music. . . . Glück was done for . . . so was Mozart. No more magic flutes, Papageno, Papagena, no more secret letters . . . except for this purring creature who was beginning all over again! So the family passwords were to be entrusted to this sentinel who could not walk as yet! The child looked at his father doubtfully uncertain as to what interested him in the face of the big man.

Evidently, another solution of the problem of life occurred to him, for his green-hazel eyes shone. Why did he want to make a fresh start when his son was on the threshold of things? Why strike out against happiness under a false name, in disguise, acting against all the rules of chivalry? Why should he, a Bardini of forty years of age, play the fraud because he had failed in the first round? There was another Bardini ready to begin

with a clear record, and Jerôme Bardini would have gloried in arming him for the struggle of life. Maybe his son would profit by the existence of his father, even though the latter had never specialized in the study of particles of iron or in collecting snuffboxes!

He was standing in the child's light by trying to dash into life like a Parsifal of forty, and take life by storm, not for the sake of adventure but as the result of his experience of life. How could he offer any woman the mystery of passion, when his emotions were dulled? Yet here was this child in his own house, new to it all. Bardini liked to play with the idea of parting from the child, just as he played with the idea of Renée's death, when he was in a cruel mood. He loved Renée and felt guilty when he thought evil of her, but he knew that the more he harbored the idea of her death the more intense his love became, who could tell how happy David Copperfield was, with his two wives—David Copperfield, the most unhappy of men? The idea haunted him for months, before he had thought of disappearing himself; and it meant anguish for him every time he saw Renée travel by train or by another means, for he believed that some catastrophe was imminent. He anticipated the most disastrous consequences with everything Renée did: whether she went to swimming, boating, or for a trip by aeroplane, he always expected a wire. . . . But she escaped scores of dangers. . . . The child began to wiggle and cry, and Bardini tried to comfort him and appease him, so that he should not wake Renée from her sleep—sleep the daily death, transient death. He soon wearied of doing duty as a nurse and he carried the child to his cradle, and tried to rock him to sleep. It was in vain, for the child would

not close his eyes, but rather fixed his gaze on Bardini, who discovered before long that Renée's hazel eyes were also fixed on him.

It is rather a strain to have four eyes staring at you: and Bardini imagined that the very trees and the walls of the house had eyes to read him through. Moreover, the four eyes were full of admiration and gratitude for his tender fatherly care, and all the time Bardini knew that he was a traitor. Renée's beauty startled him: it was always capricious, for she would look her loveliest when she was tired, or ill, or sad at parting. There was a time when he had loved Renée's passing beauty, but he had grown weary of it, because she always seemed most appealing, most attractive, when the money was all wrong in the office, or when the child was ailing. He wondered how attractive she would look that afternoon!

That summer would be fraught with longing, grief and misery for Renée; she would then not lose her beauty until autumn! She looked steadily at him, wondering why he had shaved so well and why his hair was cut so short. She knew she was looking beautiful, and she knew too that Bardini did not like her moments of triumph, so she tried to soften her victory by sad thoughts.

"I'm sure he's deceiving me," she forced herself to think. "He does not love me as much as he used to. He ought to think about the child when I'm asleep, and about me when I'm awake. He ought to kiss me when I'm asleep. I'm only his wife about once a month. . . . He forgot all about me last month: there's some separation or divorce brewing. . . ."

But each of these sad thoughts brought a flush to Renée's cheeks, intensified her expression, and gave her

the alluring touch that disguises bad women in conflict with saints, hermits and martyrs.

Bardini was seized with defiance. He wondered whether the separation would be less cruel for her, if he spoke harshly and hurt her feelings. But when he reflected that, the same evening, she would look as he had never seen her look, sad and hopeless, he obeyed her, and sat down beside her.

On the brink of the truth that it was not his to realize, beside a beauty which appeared only remotely his, Bardini looked at Renée. Lying thus before him on the eve of separation, he visualized his wife in the next stage of existence. Was it not the most noble reason he had for leaving her; Renée was still beautiful and young? Her soul was pure as her body was chaste, for marriage seemed only to have changed the chastity of girlhood into that of marriage. Risks, sacrifices and anxieties never seemed to disturb her serenity, her regrets were lukewarm and her griefs were never a burning ache.

She retained always a certain reserve, which restrained her from taking her husband's arm, or seeking a kiss, and she waited for him to take her hand. It was only when she was surrounded by an atmosphere of love and tenderness that she allowed herself these provoking half-smiles and side glances, which were her ways of expressing passionate love and joy. So, she waited. Her husband would be leaving her for ever, in a few hours: but she did not move her hand a hundredth of an inch towards him. She waited until he should bend over her. Her husband was about to embark on a new series of joy, sorrows and disasters: had she suspected it, she would still have waited for him to take her in his arms. He was

tempted to lie beside her, and take leave of her as though he were a Crusader setting forth, for he would have to have another bath before going away, to cleanse himself of all associations with his former life.

She saw that there was something unusual in the atmosphere and in the silence, and, submissive and grateful, she smiled, lying perfectly still. In spite of all your dignity, your sweetness and your charm, Renée, he thought, it's a matter of eternal separation.

"What are you thinking about?" he asked her.

He did not speak freely. Renée was not good at seeing facts or drawing logical conclusions, but she had intuition. In the days when Bardini had wanted to extend his experience, instead of deepening it as he now did, when he had flirted with other women, Renée had always mentioned his flames at the critical moment in a conversation.

"What are you thinking about? Do answer me, Renée. Let's talk."

He had sworn never to mention her name again, but he had done it. He flushed.

"Does it hurt you to call me by my name, Jerôme? Let's talk."

She sat up, not hesitating to move now that they were talking; only she felt rather sleepy. She bent towards Bardini.

"You're bored here, Jerôme. Why not go back to Paris? Bella is dead, Bellita won't come back, and don't you think we're made for Paris and not for the country?"

He got up and tried to turn aside her words by talking of the house and the child, which he had thought were of no importance to him. Everything Renée said seemed to pre-suppose the continued presence of Bardini, for she

spoke of him in connection with the child's vaccination, with his first communion, and his marriage, as though Bardini had been the child's twin. If the child lived to be a hundred years old, Bardini would be a mourner at his funeral. Like a hypocrite, he complained of feeling sad at heart and depressed; and she had a vague idea that some disaster was hovering over them, so she tried to keep it at arm's length by discussing their plans and holidays at Whitsuntide at Nice, and the Bugatti they were going to buy at Easter. Was she to do it? She was rather frightened when she was told not to, and she would have been intensely relieved if she could have seen Bardini produce tickets for Nice. And his summer coat? Why hadn't he written to the tailor about it? Had he written? No.

She lay down sadly, for she felt as though she had to face some dread disaster, and that nothing was safe.

He answered all her questions indifferently, and avoided any discussion of the future on which Renée tried so hard to sound him. She had to be content with the information that the wood for the winter had not been ordered and that no one was seeing about getting a cook for them. The absence of servants seemed ominous to Renée; it was like a dangerous hole in the web of their life. He, on his side, was reproaching himself for his stupidity in not continuing his ordinary life up to the end; for the next day, Renée would find his shoes worn down at heel, his cartridges finished, and the dogs neglected, and all these things would go to prove his premeditation.

She rose while he was thinking in this strain, and he had lost his last chance of seeing Renée's shapely legs. When she saw that the bottles of lotions were empty and

that there was no more toothpaste in the tube, she realized, once and for all, the truth. He always kept a reserve of studs for his collars, but there was only one left, and that would most likely have to wait until little Jacques needed it.

All her preparations were plentiful compared with the empty bottles on Jerôme's table, and she felt as though the bottles were the reservoir of their happiness. Her violet and amber colors shone in the sun, but there was neither green nor yellow in his bottles. She combed her hair, and searched in the drawers. There was no soap; but his Gillette razors were all there, waiting to be sharpened. Another empty bottle! She looked at the eau de Cologne bottle as though she was consulting a thermometer, but it was empty—at zero—cold as death.

"I'll write this morning to Houbigant," she said. "You haven't any more. I hope you're not going to grow a beard?"

He was annoyed with himself and he regretted his lack of consideration. The next time he was going to leave his home, he would be careful to give no such signs. Renée was searching calmly and collectedly in his wardrobe. She was astonished. He, who was usually so particular, who grew angry when he saw the slightest tears. He had nothing but ripped shirts and torn handkerchiefs! His trousers had not been pressed for weeks, and his socks were in rags. What did it all mean? Her husband's outfit was as worn out as a lobster's shell when it is cast. She felt as though her husband were standing exposed to the skin, to the heart, before her—or rather behind her, for Renée only faced people when she understood them.

His clothes were like a fugitive's or an exile's, and even

the sleeves of his new suit seemed worn and shiny. The black coat and waistcoat alone seemed to have been protected from the general fate.

The disaster anticipated by Renée came nearer and nearer. Jerôme must be ill. She went towards him: He had a velvet coat on, and she passed her hands over it, as though to reassure herself that it was really velvet. Her dear husband! In worn velvet that was hard to the touch. He only needed two new suits, a blue one and a gray, and she would write first thing this morning, to the tailor. He thought it useless to protest. This examination of the castoffs of his former life annoyed him. He was right to leave them all behind, for the red rings on his socks were all fraught with memories, and the handkerchiefs bore his initials. He made a feeble attempt to distract Renée's attention from her stock-taking.

"Maud is at Langres. She is coming to dinner tomorrow. She has written to say so."

Renée had felt sure the worst was at hand, for everything foreshadowed it down to the strange scent of the soap her husband had used, but she was set free from all foreboding by these words.

If she could count on the morrow, she could count on anything! Like a hypocrite, Jerôme had not hesitated before lying about the next day, whereas he had shrunk from misleading her about his plans for Easter and Whitsuntide. He even discussed the menu: he avoided talking about pineapples or bananas, but he had no scruples about discussing wines. Renée was still consumed with anxiety, and she spilled a bottle of violet-colored liquid over her husband, pretending it was by accident. He was furious, for he was scented with the perfume asso-

ciated with his bride on their wedding night. He went out, banging the door.

At eleven o'clock, Renée appeared, ready to go out with the letters in her hand, for she had written to Houbigant, to the tailor, and to Old England for pull-overs, to another shop for socks. Bardini offered to take them, saying that he would cycle with them to the Station, but Renée would not let him go. She said she had one or two matters to see to at Nogent, and she said good-by affectionately.

He was struck by the irony of the situation, for, a few hours before his escape, here was he in charge of the household, while his wife went out. She kissed him and rode away calmly on her bicycle in the most natural way in the world, and Bardini wished he could depart in the same serene way.

She came back when she had finished what she went to do.

Their lunch was simple. Renée had kept some game and some mushrooms for Maud, so they had only ham, macaroni and cheese, and usually Jerôme would have winced at the sight of such an insipid meal, but to-day he was glad of it. It was a kind of last communion for him. The light wine was almost finished, and seeing Renée's suspicious look he went down to the cellar and brought up another. He scarcely touched it. He wondered who would use it? Would Renée give it in despair to some workman?

"What is this wine?" she asked.

The sound of the word Vouvray or Seyssel would have cheered her, and she would have been rejoiced if Bardini had said it was Meursault, but alas! it was some insipid

wine without a name that Jerôme reserved ordinarily for the gardener or woodcutter. She felt again that the reservoirs of their life were dry: Bardini did not drink any wine, nor did he smoke. Throughout the meal, her husband seemed dead to all interests: he was indifferent when she told him that she had ordered hare for the day after to-morrow, and trout for Friday, in case Maud stayed. It appeared that at Nogent she had secured a supply of commodities which would satisfy any husband, for he was to be restocked with lotions, ointments and suits. She had two surprises for him. What could they be? In any case, they would be fraught with sadness for her, since she would have to forget about them as soon as they happened. She would tell him no more about them. He tried to fathom this last remaining link with her, but it was in vain. She was relieved when he said he would take coffee and she suggested having it in the garden, for it was a fine day in Autumn.

The butterflies of spring were still showing themselves in the golden season.

With their backs to the sun, they sat facing its sunny fields. There had been a long period of mild weather, without cold or frost, and it was an unusual phenomenon in that part of the country to have such prolonged fine weather. It might have been arranged by Nature on purpose. The coffee was good, and Renée thought it was about the best she had ever made. She was so pleased that she made a gesture, and in doing so, upset her coffee and broke the cup. It was an Indian porcelain cup of a set which Bardini valued so highly that he would not at first trust Renée to wash it. When he grew accustomed

to her gentle ways, he conferred the charge upon her. But now, he scarcely seemed to care, for he laughed at her tears, and consoled her. Why cry over a broken cup? He did not know that she was crying for something beside a broken cup. She thought that the time had come when he would let the servants wash the cups. She thought of Jerôme's death. It is thus that ultra-refined men behave the day before committing suicide. They do not flinch if their precious stamps are burnt, or if anything else they value is destroyed.

She suddenly noticed that the garden was withered and dreary, for the winter sprouts were not sown, and the summer's ones were over. There was grass growing on the path where Jerôme, once upon a time, had always walked up and down while smoking his afternoon cigar. Her husband seemed to have abandoned everything as though he were dead, but it was not death, for his hair, his beard and his nails were cut more carefully than usually. He looked strong and young as though he was full of life and energy. She still did not understand, and she sounded him to try to fathom the riddle.

"Let's go away from here, Jerôme, we are quite rich again now. You don't need this post. I understand that you're bored. Before Jacques was born, I couldn't stand it and I was ready to run away, although I loved you as much as ever then."

"You wanted to run away!"

"Yes—I wanted to escape, to disappear." Thus for the second time, on the fatal day, it was the loyal and steadfast wife who seemed to be parting from her husband. The first time, in actual fact, with her bicycle, the second

time with this false declaration to her husband on the eve of his departure. She made her last effort to retain her hold on the man, who would never again smile on her, when she had a headache, nor support her when she slipped, nor hold her shoes when she crossed a ford.

"You wanted to disappear? Why?"

Poor Renée was blundering the whole time.

"I don't quite know," she said, "I had queer illusions. Everything about me seemed new, even my brushes and my scissors. It was as though I had no habits . . ."

"Did I seem different to you like a stranger?"

"You seemed a new man, Jerôme."

"You really thought of going away?"

"Yes, one day; I had even packed my trunks, and everything was ready, but I hadn't taken my ticket."

A death ticket! Jerôme was no longer interested in this childish idea of flight with luggage. As Mr. de Fontranges arrived to pay his daily call, Bardini got up.

"Hello, Jerôme," said Mr. de Fontranges, "you're off, are you?"

"Yes, I am," answered Jerôme.

"He's even forgotten his hat," said Fontranges. One of our ancestors forgot his helmet when he was setting off for Constantinople, and he didn't wear any other throughout the Crusade. That's why the sun often strikes us on the nose."

"Jerôme!" Renée called out.

She waved her husband's straw hat in the air, but he did not turn back. The hat was old and it cracked in her hand. Without saying a word, she looked at the man who would never be hers again. She saw him through a mirror as he passed without turning round, and she real-

ized that there was only one word for it: he was disappearing.

Bardini had meditated so long over his scheme that he acted as though he were under a spell. He had no hat and he was obliged to acknowledge for the last time the greetings of the grocer, lawyer, and the keeper, and he was sorry that he had to take this kind of personal leave of all these people.

Crossing the fields, he reached the Seine, after a walk of about four miles, just at the point where it bends as it does at the Concorde, but this time it is near its source. He undressed on the bank and left his clothes there, as he told his wife in his letter, so that she could consider him drowned if she so wished. He plunged into the river and reveled in swimming, thinking that man might do worse than change places with fishes. Every trace of Renée's scent was now being borne towards Paris, and instead, he would carry only the fragrance of Mont Gerbier des Joncs. He delighted in going the opposite way to the current, then in floating with it, and playing hide and seek with death. He would have to get out of the water to take the little waterproof bag with the two thousand dollars he had scraped together one by one, for three years, as though he were saving for a present—it was a present for himself at the beginning of his second life. His clothes did not fit him. They were too long, and he was not unduly moved by the sight of the things that belonged to his first life. The coat and trousers were filled with dirt for ever since they would no longer be worn by the man they were supposed to fit. That was the first inconvenience of his flight. He touched the material and buttonhole as he would had they been the skin and

the mouth of his own corpse. He noticed the parts that were worn and shiny with use in his first life. But this corpse of his had no head!

He plunged into the river again, holding the waterproof bag between his teeth, and he reached the other side like a shipwrecked mariner who abandons his raft in order to make for land. He found his clothes in a little leather case, inside one of those hollow willow trees where holiday-makers believe that owls nest, for it was there he had hidden them two days before. He dressed himself. Unwittingly, he had adopted the American way of thinking, and he could have thought he had crossed the Atlantic instead of the Seine; moreover it was quite American to be mixing incognito with men, in the world of art or of music—and it was somehow different even to be wandering incognito in a wood. Never again would there be any relations or dealings between Bardini the first and an apple tree or an orange tree! He could not have felt younger or fresher if he had been standing before the oranges of Marrakech.

For a moment, he had a strange idea, not that he was changed, but that those he had known were changed into trees. He would have liked to have seen the trees of Renée and Fontranges in blossom! The taste of their fruits was still bitter in his mouth. The second event in his life was the arrival of animals: cows, the most serene of all animals, and a donkey, and Bardini reflected that it had come up to him at the beginning of his life, as others of its kind had once greeted another cradle with a new-born Babe in it. The cow he patted thought she was the only creature in the world he loved; so too did the donkey when he talked to it. Ideas struck him which

were unknown to Adam when he was learning the ways of the animals created at the beginning of the world. A goat came up, rearing and frisking about Bardini like a dancing girl in a revue, and Bardini knew there were other animals over there too: bulls, does, asses, and each offered his imagination a possible career he could follow in his new life. He might be a cowman, a farm laborer or a milkman; or else a wagoner or a horseman, and that would lead to military service and the greatest liberty of all . . . that of war. That is why men who think they are free and independent join "la légion étrangère." But already the animals were grazing, neglectful of Bardini, who realized that their relations with Nature invariably took up three-quarters of the day. He lay down on the ground and broke off a twig, thinking he would like to carve his initials on it, until he remembered that he had none. That set him wondering what name he would choose, and he felt the same delightful uncertainty about the choice of a name as about that of a career. No! certainly, he had not left a happy home, a pretty wife and a rich district to begin life again with the failings and faults of a Frenchman with a name like Durand or Brethon. He was not going to be an example of the wisdom or the avarice or any of the other national characteristics of the country he had belonged to in his first life. He was going to belong to a country where men are always free and always young, always confident and always thriftless. Quebec or Christiania should be the Capitals of his nation, for he would, at least, enjoy the liberty of a sea-voyage to get to either of them. Thus Bardini confused the ideas of traveling and of liberty, in his very hazy conception of the latter. He laughed at his own

ideas, and declared that he would make a nation of his own for himself. An aeroplane passed. He smiled at it as a symbol of liberty: he was one of those men, like aviators and inventors, who find no liberty in the iron ages of men. A king-fisher passed—he smiled as he thought of its tethered movement of its soul of a bird bound to the earth. He remembered that, when he was at school, children used to sing a song that associated the ideas of liberty with Switzerland. Yes, the Swiss with their wooden houses fixed like Noah's Arks, on to the mountain tops, where Noah could still be dwelling, for all any one would know about it! It was Gessler who had given them freedom, but they were still slaves to Protestantism, to winter and to the heights they could never conquer! He sat up, and then lay down again, for he intended to profit by his liberty to do as he liked. The sun was still high in the sky and his own shadow looked finer than usual. The sun marked no passing hours to him. It traveled in space without affecting birth and without death. Twilight had never before fallen, and found him free of duties and responsibilities; his one hope was that he would not dream of his first life, for it would have been a cruel vengeance. His dreams had, at least, been free before. He shuddered at the idea of dreaming about his child, or about receipts or about empty bottles. Suddenly, night seemed as though it would be a mirror of the past for him. He heard footsteps behind him, and he saw the first human being since his disappearance: it was a woman, and she stopped in front of him.

Fate must have gone to no little trouble to provide this Adam with his Eve: for the first created woman in

his new life was wearing a rose-colored linen dress, with champagne silk stockings and she had a blue and white sunshade. She was the schoolgirls' idea of beauty—just what they all long to be when they have left the awkward ages behind and reached the bloom of perfection. Bardini did not get up, but he raised his head to get a better view of her, for he was ready to start on a finer or a lower stage of existence; and to see a barmaid or a nymph. She stood quite still, and this created a link between them: it was as though she knew all about him. It was a chance meeting but there was something theatrical about it, especially as the woman had the typical actress's build; an amazingly fair skin, considering that she was out of doors; blue eyes that looked made-up and very red lips, which were, however, natural. She was Indiana, who had come to the country, on the invitation of Fontranges, because of her health. She looked at Bardini as she had always looked at escaped prisoners during her childhood at Melun. She knew well enough those rough suits, flattened out not by ironing, but by being hidden under beds or piles of wood; and the newly-trimmed nails and recently cropped hair, for they all tried to escape the day before the barber came. Bardini had had his hair cut a week before. They were all the same, idling in the fields, and lying on the grass, as a change from the straw they had had. Most likely, he would ask her the way and for once she could truthfully say that she didn't know it. All that she could tell him was that the river was the Seine; and let him get on as best he could with the Seine, as all the others had to do. She came up to him quite naturally for, whether she was in the fields or behind a bar, Indiana invariably went up to any man who

happened to be there, not from any particular weakness for men, but simply by force of magnetism. He did not make any movement, for he felt that fate was deceiving him, and playing with him by making everything seem too well arranged. She stood beside him and it was the first time she had ever looked down on a man.

She was looking down at him as one looks at fishes, but she could not make out what Bardini was thinking about. She sat beside him, filling the air with a scent he recognized and although she called it essence of clover, it was very different from the clover in the fields. The first shelter which Bardini found from the heat of the sun was under Indiana's sunshade. Eventually, she made up her mind to speak:

"Was it a hard job to get away?"

She asked the question nonchalantly, and her voice sounded worn out. The words seemed to come to her without her seeking for them, and with her doll's eyes she was more like a door than a human being. Bardini was surprised that the question was so appropriate, and he was not pleased by it. It was like a coincidence in a novel, and it was absurd. He did not answer.

"You're French—can't you speak?"

She moved her sunshade aside when she bent to speak to him and the sun shone on her hair while she waited for an answer. He hesitated before pronouncing the first word in his new language, and the familiarity with which she addressed him seemed unreal.

"And your number?" she asked.

At Melun, Indiana had a craze for asking the escaped prisoners their numbers, for she was trying to evolve a theory, and she found out that the twenty-first had the

record. She would have been pleased if this one had had her fatal number, which was thirteen. She had not much imagination. It was thirteen who had tried to kill herself on the race-course, when she wanted to annoy Weil. The time that Marcelle's precious fur had been stolen, it was a thirteen who had done it. It was difficult for her to see which of these two events had been fortunate or unfortunate for her.

"And what are you doing here?" asked Bardini.

She was waiting for the time to go back, another week and she would have been away a month. There was no liberty in the country. In Paris, the barman didn't want her to wear white dresses; here, the farmer forbade her to wear red dresses. She liked to go into the stables, when he turned his back, in her silk jumper. It was so hot! The farmer tried to order her about, and forbade her mixing cocktails. She had all she needed in her little bag, and she wanted to take vengeance on him.

The sun was setting, warming everything with its golden glow. The farmer ordered her to wear trousers but the bees got to her knees and stung her. Bardini was annoyed by this irony of fate, which offered him the best chances of escape on the night of his flight. According to Indiana, there were other ways out. Some had taught her to smoke maize and suck the bark of trees—ever so good! Deadly night-shade was not worth its name, for she had eaten it, and nothing had happened. Had she tried morphia? No, only on the boy and the dog, who hadn't stood it well. Indiana did not say that they threatened to call a doctor, if she went on. She had no fear of policemen, but the sight of doctors terrified her. In the country people tried to make her sew, but she

couldn't; she knew how to tattoo, but she had no good needles. No, you couldn't fitch tattoos; if he looked, he would find there were no two the same in the country then . . . she had the dragon tattoo.

Bardini looked. . . . He was not altogether satisfied with this adventure, this second coincidence which threatened to spoil the first evening of his new life.

Indiana was sitting still opposite him, as though she were a snare, and he felt that she was an implacable, impartial fate, as the concierges, policemen and Americans felt when they came up against such a charming woman without any feeling. Liberty? But was it liberty, if he was going to be tied to this woman's apron strings forever? He turned round. He lay on the ground and looked at this being who stood between him and his freedom. She had closed her sunshade. Indiana gazed fixedly at the sun, which ordinarily she saw either to the left or the right of the Arc-de-Triomphe; and it was the only time the sun would flush or gild the cool white skin of Indiana. But she was impassive in her attitude towards Nature and towards everything else, and she declined Nature's approaches as she would those of a man. She scorned to look at her reflection in the Seine. She scorned the evening breezes to cool her. She scorned the rippling Seine itself. She scorned twilight. She crossed her legs and waited for the fugitive to question her. She had no fear of thieves and loungers, as if poverty and astuteness were the companions of her sex.

Where did she sleep? In a room where the steward had slept before, and there was only a partition between her and the stables. On the mornings, the boys tried not to wake her when they were feeding the cattle, but it was

no good. So she used to get up and play with the calves; she fondled the little ones, she who had never caressed any creature of her own free will. Was she looking after herself? The doctor had ordered her a diet: she took fresh milk in the shippars at night. In the mornings she would go to the slaughter house, to drink a glass of warm blood. Blood in the mornings, milk at night.

A child's voice was heard in the dark, calling Indiana.

"It's the kid," she said. "Every evening, he thinks I'm lost or drowned, and goes to look for me near the Seine. He's promised he will run away from his family to meet me at Paris."

The clear voice rang out again calling Indiana, but there was no echo answering the human voice. Indiana got up and promised to return; she disappeared into the darkness.

There was no voice to call Bardini. The stillness of the valley seemed to be the echo of his own silence. Night imported a kind of mystery to his departure. It was the hour when watch dogs bark and rush at passers-by. He decided the best thing he could do was to go by train to Nogent, and passing his own house, spend the night in the forests of Champagne. The stars were up and shining; their brilliance seemed to be significant of the eternal youth of the world. Before this great firmament, he felt as absurd as a musician playing his violin before the roaring sea. He knew little enough about the sky, so he could not take his direction from the stars.

Darkness, solitude and perfect liberty were going to lead him back into the old ruts of his life. He went across the white fences to Fontranges' house, and frightened the fowls; then the watch dog began barking and set all the

dogs in the neighborhood barking, even up to the Capel at Silly where Bardini had been married and the second-hand dealer's house, where he and Renée went sometimes to look for treasures. When Bardini and Renée were feeling pleased with life, they would go and rummage in the old shop, and return triumphant with their finds.

When he had crossed the river, he fell to recollections of his youth, of the days when he had gone there to fish for trout. A carrier pigeon ought never to return to his early haunts. Bardini lost his way among the woods, until eventually he caught sight of the moon through the branches. He hastened on, like an escaped convict making his way through the last brushwood towards the dazzling sun. . . . Suddenly he paused. . . . Fate had brought night up to Bella's grave. So, he had to take leave of the dead as well. . . .

The moon was full. This planet, which so often looks dogs'-eared in France, as though it were reduced by avarice and by the spirit of thrift, was really full, and Bardini thought he had never seen it so round, as though it were ready to burst. At ten o'clock at night, it was as though a great game of hide and seek were going on in the park, for moonlight and shadows were chasing one another everywhere, except on the white marble stone, which showed up in striking contrast. There was not a speck of dust, not a shadow to soften the gleaming whiteness of the marble in the moonlight, and Bardini recalled the day when it was placed there. The ceremony was more like that of laying a foundation stone than a grave stone. Bardini admired the shining walls of the completed monument. They were there as they would stand forever, without change or variation; evolution and time

could not affect any more the chill corpse of Bella. The clumps of birches and pine trees, together with the beechwood, made a perfect circle around Bella's tomb. The night was still, but one heard far echoed sounds, and it seemed as though Bella were indeed alone; aloof from the society of the dead, both glorious and inglorious. Bardini stood still for a long time, with his eyes fixed on the marble slab; his breath was coming in swift, short catches as it does in a wild animal that is frightened. He was free to gaze at the infinite serenity as long as he liked. He noticed that the slight slope of the grave seemed to form a pillow under Bella's head, and it was like a hold for treasure, with the heavy iron chain around it. Bardini felt that this still, serene atmosphere was the most fitting of all in which to take leave of life. He was about to emerge from the brushwood to go nearer the tomb, so that he could read the name engraved on it, when he heard a voice call from the other side of the tomb:

"Isn't that you, Richard?"

There was Fontranges leaning against a tree, just where he stood every night in his pilgrimage to Bella's tomb. He thought he recognized one of the keepers, and the sound of his voice, the voice of an old man, like a call from feudal times, calmed Bardini's anxiety.

"Every act of liberty is hard," he reflected. "There are people standing in every possible place where I could have jumped over the wall. First that girl, and now the old man's voice, without mentioning the owl, which was ready to attack me like a sheep dog after its flock!"

"Is it you, Frederick?" called out Fontranges, trying the name of a poacher this time.

"Yes, that's right," thought Bardini. "It's Barbarossa

and, too, Lion-Hearted. Anything you like . . . Prosper or Jean, or John or Eyrick!"

"Is it you, Jerôme?"

Fontranges walked to the head of the grave, and searched across the brushwood as though he were looking for a pheasant he had lost; but he saw nothing, no one. It took Fontranges nearly an hour to make up his mind to leave any place, whether he was visiting the living or the dead, for he was slow of thought.

When Fontranges had gone down towards the château, Bardini crossed the park and came out just behind his own house.

He faced the last obstacle. He went in.

. . . . . .

Every creature in the house was asleep: the canary, with its head under its wing; the cats purring on their ledge; the dogs on their straw. The kitchen tap was running, and for the first time the animals of the Bardini household were soothed to sleep by the sound of running water. The birds' feathers and the animals' coats looked more glossy and brilliant than in the daytime, but the house itself looked older. He noticed with displeasure the loose tiles in the floor of the passage, the patched up pane and the rusty bolt; there was a broken-down chair—broken like everything else in this world and the other! . . . Although he had been away from it only one-half day, he came back to the house and found it smaller and strange, as though he had been away from it twenty years. The moon shone with a dull light, like the beacon of a ship that has foundered, a ship with two living souls. . . .

Not only were the animals the same as when he had

left the house, but also the flowers in the dining room were the same—flowers, the most short-lived of all living things. The air was still heavy with the scent of the roses and narcissi that Renée had gathered. Bardini remembered the perfume. His portraits were still in the same place over the fireplace: at communion and as a soldier. He felt no sympathy towards the individuals in the portraits; neither towards the child who had taken the sacrament for him, nor the soldier who had carried his kit for him, and when he saw his reflection in the mirror, he looked at it as though it were strange to him. It made him think that a long period had elapsed between his two lives, and he hated the idea. A moth fluttered about, as though it had escaped from this new man. He killed it.

A ray of light filtered through the keyhole. He knocked at the door.

"Come in!" said Renée.

She was sitting in her dressing-gown, writing at the desk. Bardini's letter was lying on the table. She looked at Bardini in a cold, indifferent way that was not like her; this woman, who had always been tender, gentle and sweet, dismayed him by her look of hatred, and, still worse, by her evident scorn for his convict's disguise—Bardini was horribly alarmed to find in this room, not a victim of fate, but a woman of pride and initiative. He thought she was unjust: all women have a genius for showing up and insisting on the one disloyal act in a man's life and arguing from the particular to the general. The farce of his preparations—his outfits and his case—made him furious with himself.

Renée was standing with her back to the Psyche. But the old Renée, gentle and trustful, seemed to have taken

to flight with Bardini. He went towards her, uncertain of his own feelings, but he would have loved to spend one more night with her; he would have loved to have forced her to give way to him by the passion of his love, as he had forced her before to yield over little things, such as the purchase of animals, for she had no love for them. He had so far prevailed as to have a score of animals in the house. But she forbade him to approach with a gesture, and taking a pencil, she wrote on a sheet of paper some words which she held up for him to see.

Her writing was generally appalling, but now it was perfectly legible. She had written:

"Go away."

He bent his head and went out.

LIFE—AN OBSTACLE RACE

Ch. Henry Hirsch

Léa de Barcy very regularly attended the race meetings, and all the people she saw there were well known to her.

Often an owner would advise her as to the chances of a horse, or having overheard a discussion between stable lads and jockeys about the probable result of an important event, she would back what appeared to be a certainty, and if she lost, she was able to explain why she should have won.

One fine Easter Sunday, in the early spring, Léa went to Auteuil; all her troubles, and they were many, forgotten for a while, and enjoyed the sensation created by her very original clothes.

She wore a long purple cloth jacket, very similar to a Russian coat, with the collar and lapels the color of a duck's egg. Her hat, a small round affair, matched the heavy Russian boots, which revealed the exquisite lines of her feet and the beautiful shape of her legs, and completed the "ensemble."

Coralie: brother and sister: the dressmakers, had disagreed about that coat and hat; the brother had refused to put their name to the audacious creation, but the sister, who admired daring, had thought it would have been a good advertisement. Coralie's sister was a very ugly woman, and as is often the case took an almost vicious delight in making pretty women still prettier, and Léa

was certainly pretty, a typical Parisian, her insolent smile, her flaming hair and her sensual gait told who she was and where she came from.

That day as she walked along looking straight at people, she read admiration in the men's eyes and jealousy in the women's, and she smiled as she remembered the feel of the old Lord Chelsea's hand and Grindall's kiss on the tip of her fingers as he complimented her on her beauty and her dress.

Suddenly a voice interrupted her reverie—"Bravo, Léa! What a marvelous creation!" The man who spoke, an expert on women's clothes, had at one time been an intimate friend of Léa's; she had thought he was hers forever; but it had barely lasted sixteen months, this wonderful love. Count Chonnebot had left her to make a rich American his countess.

"You are the belle of the meeting," was the gentleman's verdict, and while she told him that her dress had been designed by herself, she saw him look at her with such meaning that she felt she was losing her calm, for is it not true that the fire of real love never dies out and can be revived by the lightest breeze?

"Are you happy?" she asked.

"I have to be," replied Chonnebot.

She had reverted to the familiar "tu" of days gone by; he had noticed it with delight but didn't use it in return.

"And you, my dear Léa, are you happy?"

Léa shrugged her shoulders. "Why ask that, what does it matter?" She ended her words in a laugh as she saw Chonnebot nervously look towards the stand where the rest of his party could be seen. "Poor old thing," she teased, "you are well watched. You had better join the

ladies or your wife will scold you. I suppose she holds you on a leash."

After more bantering on her part, Chonnebot obtained permission to meet her in the paddock before the third race. She assured him it was no use, but as he insisted that he had something to say to her, she gave in.

Her gaze followed him as he walked away, remembering how perfect a friend he had been, and regretting that fate had wrenched him from her. She had suffered so much that many things had ceased to affect her, and she couldn't even be jealous of the woman who possessed him now and wanted to keep him.

As long as her beauty and charm lasted she was a slave to them both, and all slaves are passive. She had read that somewhere and knew it to be true.

Although not yet thirty, she had lived at such a pace that she felt much older, and the future seemed to have nothing more in store for her. Nevertheless, guessing what Chonnebot desired to see her about, she wanted to spare herself the pain of an interview with him. She was afraid that before his passionate entreaties she would not be able to force herself to lie and tell him that he meant no more to her than any other man she met. It would be very hard indeed and poor Léa didn't feel ready for the battle. Life is rotten, she thought, and clenched her teeth.

When Chonnebot had left her, Léa, in despair, had gone to pieces: cocktails, champagne and finally morphia had been her comforters. She had been saved from further debasement by another woman who had since died, unable to keep away from the deadly drugs. Léa was deep in a brown study, when Madame Muche interrupted

her thoughts and brought her back to earth. Madame Muche arranged marriages between rich old men and pretty women, and she had come to Léa to talk business. Bringing out a notebook and pencil, she asked: "Are you free to-morrow afternoon, because if you are I've got something really good for you this time; will you come?"

Léa hesitated. If she came, she came, and if she didn't, well, she just didn't, that was all.

Madame Muche grew impatient as she tried to reason with her. At last, seeing that people were staring at them and passing jocular remarks, Léa promised to come to see the new find, and sent Madame Muche away to carry on her strange business in some other part of the paddock.

The sudden cheers of an enthusiastic crowd drew her attention to a close phalanx of horses galloping past the winning post. She noticed that the winner was the horse she had wanted to back, but for no reason whatever hadn't. She was a fool, she told herself, never to obey her first intuition. In real life she always did the exact opposite of what her common sense told her and she was going to be an also ran in the race of life. As these thoughts passed through her brain Léa lost all her "joie de vivre," and she sighed as she watched the winner, an outsider, walk home bearing away all her hopes of making a small fortune that afternoon.

Deafened by the cheers of two hundred thousand people acclaiming the winner, she didn't hear her friend, Nicole Dennis came up to her side. She turned with a start when Nicole excitedly informed her that at last she was making money.

"It's about time you won, Nicole."

"I should say so. I've had such rotten luck lately."

"But you must try to look on the bright side of things," advised Léa.

"When one can, Léa, but it is not always possible." Nicole Dennis was rather sporty, but for all that a nice girl and good friend. She might have been quite rich had she not been such a gambler. After the war, and the death of her husband, broken-hearted, she had sought solace in pleasure that rich foreigners were only too pleased to give her, thus hastening her downfall. Now she haunted the race courses trying to increase her income by betting.

Léa had once been jealous of Nicole, but after Chonnebot's departure the two women had had a long talk and a close friendship had been the result.

The gong announcing the third race reminded Léa that she was to meet Chonnebot, so she slowly made her way to the paddock. In the distance she saw Madame Muche in earnest conversation with an oily looking individual, probably to-morrow's candidate. There were few people in the paddock and only one horse was being led up and down. She remembered the four hundred francs she had pushed into her bag as she left home, but she had lost all desire to gamble, so it was without great curiosity that she looked at the board and saw that Gloriosus was mounted by Ridoire.

Ridoire. . . .

There was a story going round about Ridoire. It was said that he was a very devout gentleman, and very kind to all the poor in the racing game. He was a fanatic admirer of the sport and had become a jockey to satisfy

his craving for victories in the world of sport. He was one of the few Frenchmen who had won the Grand National on the dangerous Liverpool track. He took a delight in courting danger, trusting in his strength and skill to save him each time.

He had shown Léa that trait of his character one evening, when Chonnebot on some foolish excuse had left them alone in a box at the Variétés.

Léa, feeling that things had reached a climax between herself and Chonnebot, was in a temper and, interrupting Ridoire, asked, "Chonnebot's marriage is a sure thing now, isn't it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Don't pretend you know nothing about it, but, anyhow it's of no importance to me." Ridoire then told her that it was true that Miss Peggy Aurora Gleans of New York was soon to become Countess Gerald de Chonnebot.

The future bridegroom had asked his friend to break the news to Léa that very night, and Ridoire wasn't finding the task so very hard after all. The girl was taking everything so very coolly.

Ever since he had been introduced to Léa, he had liked her, but the bonds of friendship between himself and Gerald were so strong that Ridoire would have cursed himself for a cad had he revealed his feelings to Léa, who was Chonnebot's property. But that evening the situation had changed.

His eagerness to please her ought to have shown her the sincerity of his feelings. He searched for words to express his thoughts but he was as tongue-tied as if he had been before a Grande Dame. He at last managed to tell her that she would make a most delightful friend.

She had been insulting in the way she had repulsed the man as her tortured soul sent forth a torrent of passionate words, anathematizing Chonnebot and all his cynical friends.

She lowered her voice as the curtain went up, but soon the storm abated and there remained only a very unhappy woman sobbing desperately. His gentleness as he helped her on with her cloak and the kind words he spoke as they left the box and went towards the theater door, calmed her and nearly broke down the barrier she had put between them. But all her hatred for men rushed back in one overwhelming wave as she caught sight of two miserable specimens of humanity fighting in the street. Turning her back on the only man who had been decent to her, she left Ridoire standing alone on the theater steps.

Later, days when she was feeling particularly miserable, she thought of him with a pang of remorse. She would have given anything to see him again, but she had let things drift, and now it was perhaps too late to tell him she was sorry.

To-day, however, she had met both men. A thrill of excitement went up and down her spine as she remembered the prediction of a fortune teller she had consulted a few days ago: "I see two men who will bring great changes in your life."

Near by somebody interrupted her thoughts—"Gloriosus is a dead certainty, all the more so as Ridoire is mounting her."

"Yes," came the reply, "but even Ridoire can break his neck, so don't be too sure."

Léa then fancied she saw the horse crash, crushing her

rider. It was only a fleeting vision, but it left the girl as limp as if she had seen the real thing happen and she was well nigh to fainting. Just then she saw Chonnebot coming towards her and as he approached she noticed the elegance of his attire, and his clear-cut features. A tall, fair boy was with him, an American cousin or brother-in-law, thought Léa, who was delighted that Chonnebot had been unable to come alone. As Gerald showed him the way to the betting booths and came on towards her, panic seized Léa, who hadn't yet made up her mind whether she would see him or not. It was too late to flee, so she waited for him, behind the people who were discussing the chances of Gloriosus. The filly was being led up and down by a long-legged stable lad. The man's and woman's voices as they exchanged commonplace words of greeting were dulled by the noise of the crowd. Suddenly Gerald, pointing to Ridoire, who had just arrived, called "Lucien!" The jockey turned and came towards them.

"Do you know, Lucien, that Léa has just told me that she has only come here to see you?"

"And to reopen a certain conversation we had," said the girl; "that is, if you haven't forgotten what it was about."

"Forgotten! as if it were possible to forget! . . . but I am afraid there is little time just now to say all we have to say."

Gerald broke in with a sharp, "Are you quite ready, old man?"

"Quite."

"Are you sure of Gloriosus?"

"Quite."

And again ignoring Gerald, he turned to Léa and reopened the conversation, complimenting her on her dress.

"I'll think so much more of it now I know that you admire it," was the reply.

"Oh, you're pulling my leg."

"Not at all. Please believe me. I'm quite sincere. You wouldn't doubt me if I hadn't made such a fool of myself at the theater. I've been wanting to see you ever since to tell you I am sorry, but somehow we never seemed to come together and I might have waited longer still for your forgiveness if Gerald hadn't seen you and called you."

"My forgiveness! Of course I forgive you. I only regret that we have been kept apart so long, but hope that we shall now make up for lost time, I have so much I want to say."

His eyes flashed a message which no woman would misunderstand.

Black Snow, the favorite's most dangerous rival, had just been led into the enclosure. Joey Belt, a drink sodden brute who endangered his life each time he rode, swung into the saddle. Gerald and Lucien noticed his condition.

"He's absolutely drunk," said Lucien, "and has been kicking up an infernal row in the dressing-room." Seeing that the horses were lining up, Lucien took leave of his friends and, with a farewell wave of his riding crop, went towards his horse, put one foot in the stirrup and swung into saddle, feeling strangely happy, for had he not arranged to meet Léa at the buffet after the race, the race he was going to win for her, like a knight of old who fought battles for his lady fair.

When horse and rider were out of earshot, Gerald no longer contained his jealousy.

"I didn't come here to hear you promise to meet other men."

"But I came here to see Ridoire, not you, so it's quite natural that I should want to see him again," was the unexpected reply.

"Léa, listen to me."

"No."

"You must; you've got to!"

"Not if I don't want to!"

"But, Léa, if you knew how I have missed you."

"Is that all, only missed me, while I went through hell because of you? Oh, you disgust me. If your marriage has turned out to be a failure, it serves you right. I've no sympathy for you, and I hate you."

"Léa, don't, for God's sake, don't say that; have you forgotten the glorious time we had together?"

"The past is dead, and one leaves the dead alone. I have suffered too much to want to remember. *Can't* you see that I have forgotten, and that I once more enjoy life which I implored God to take away? Have you no pity in your heart, Gerald, for the poor victim you sacrificed to the Golden Calf?"

"But you knew that my marriage saved me from bankruptcy."

"You broke my heart, *you* cannot mend it."

"Let me try."

"It's no use, Gerald: let's be acquaintances, but never again shall we be friends. Good-by."

Gerald seized the hand that was given him and held it tight between his burning palms, and would have burst

into passionate entreaties had not the cousin from America stopped him. He had lost sight of Chonnebot and had been looking for him among the crowd for half an hour.

Gerald, still holding Léa's hand, told him roughly to "clear out," and went on pleading, hoping against hope that she would relent. Her coldness seemed to fan his passion, till he no longer could master his emotion.

"Léa, I love you, nay, I worship you more than ever. I have realized these last months how dear you are to me, and that life without you is impossible. Let's pick up the threads where we left off and go on weaving the beautiful tapestry of love we began together. Say yes, dear heart, listen to my pleading and say you will come back and be mine once more. I swear before God that nothing will disturb our divine happiness. Believe me, I swear by . . ."

"By your wife, I suppose."

"Woman, I am telling the truth. I'd sacrifice even my honor if that could bring you back to my arms, you, my own. Léa, dearest, forgive a man who has been blind and is now your abject slave."

"If you want me so badly," replied the girl, disdainfully, "you had better call on Mme. Muche; she, providing you pay, will arrange the meeting."

The spell was broken. Gerald saw that the woman he had once scorned and hoped to recapture by the charm of his words, was lost to him forever.

Without looking around at the man she had so deeply hurt, Léa, inwardly ashamed of her callousness, joined the crowd and settled down to watch the third race.

Nicole came up to her friend and told her of her suc-

cess of the afternoon. "What have you staked on Gloriosus, Léa?" she demanded.

"My life," was the reply.

Nicole, unable to understand the words or the bitterness of the tone, scolded her.

"You seem to be miles away."

"Not so far as all that."

"You are strange. I guess it's because you met that cad Chonnebot. You mustn't be miserable because of him; he's not worth it, the beast. I'd like to give him a piece of my mind. Come along. We'll get closer to the barrier. There's no room in the stands."

The two girls took their places at the railing just as the gong announced the start of the race.

Around them all agreed, without exception, that Gloriosus was the most probable winner and that Ridoire was the most intelligent jockey.

Léa screwed up her eyes and tried to distinguish the horse and rider among the close group of horses galloping away out of sight. She thought she could see Ridoire's blue cap and gold and black coat flash in and out of the other caps and coats, but she wasn't quite sure.

The horses disappeared behind a clump of trees. When they came into view again, Gloriosus was leading, with Black Snow close upon her heels. Gaining inch by inch, Joe Belt was neck and neck with Ridoire. The English jockey's face was a hideous purple mask and his arm went up and down with mechanical regularity as he lashed his mount with his crop.

"What a brute!" Nicole couldn't help saying.

"He's as tight as an owl, according to Ridoire," added Léa. Once more silent, the two women followed the race

with mixed feelings. Both hoped Ridoire would win, one for sentimental reasons and the other for mercenary ones.

Many thoughts raced through Léa's brain; she was sorry she had been so brutal to Chonnebot. After all, it wasn't really his fault that he had treated her so badly. He was a weakling, more to be pitied than blamed, and she decided to say something nice to him, if ever they met again, to make up for the hard words she had spoken.

Life, she reflected, was just one long year and was divided into four seasons. The spring of her life had been a mixture of fine and bad weather, with a little more bad weather than is usual in the spring, but now spring was twining into summer, which promised to be a golden one.

And still the two horses came on. Joe Belt used his whip with such cruelty that the two women openly voiced their disgust. Some one, overhearing them, took Joe's part. "After all, he's out to win. He knows what his horse can do and how to get the best out of the beast. One must be fair to the man even if he is English."

Nicole didn't like being contradicted. She coldly told the intruder that she wasn't talking to him, but she couldn't help laughing at the reply: "It isn't because I'm thinking aloud, Madam, that my thoughts are not worth hearing; and, what is more, I've got a hundred francs on Black Snow, so . . ." He proceeded to enlighten his fair listeners still more.

"The issue of the race depends on the water jump in front of the stands," the man continued. "The one who clears that will just walk home, but that's not yet awhile. They've still got the short water jump and the open ditch to get over, so there is chance of a third beating them."

The compact group of horses going at a terrific pace

followed the two leaders, over obstacles and in and out of the trees. It was quite obvious that Joe was trying to corner Ridoire and the crowd began to murmur. Suddenly the crowd saw Ridoire use his whip for the first time. Gloriosus shot forward and, gaining ground at every step, soon left Black Snow behind to be swallowed up in the ranks as the others came up.

"Ridoire is leading. What a race, and not one crash. My God . . ."

Hardly had the words left the speaker's lips than his arm shot out and pointed to a far away part of the field, where a riderless horse was slowing down; one obstacle less for Gloriosus, who still led. The crowd cheered uproariously as the horse cleared a hedge, the others close to her heels.

There was a dead silence as Gloriosus reached the famous water jump that was to decide the issue of the race.

The highly strung animal hesitated, stumbled and crashed, rolled over once or twice, then lay still, crushing its rider beneath its huge body.

The accident was exact in all its details to the vision that Léa had before the race. Her horrified eyes took in the scene, her hands gripped the railing before her, and she swayed like somebody drunk.

The crowd burst out into delirious cheering again, forgetting their fallen idol to acclaim a new one: "Black Snow, Black Snow!" cried the people.

Joe Belt using the butt end of his whip cleared the jump, for an instant held back Black Snow, then letting him go on the straight run, gained a length which he maintained till he shot past the winning-post.

"Confound it," wailed Nicole, "I've lost again." Léa was still hanging on to the barrier, unconscious to all that was going on, her eyes glued to the spot where half a dozen men were busy with a stretcher and a human form laid out on the turf. Nicole, turning round caught sight of her friend's white face and was frightened, forgetting her ill luck. She led the poor woman away from the curious stare of the crowd that had quickly gathered at the sight of a fainting woman. Old Lord Chelsea seeing from a distance that something was wrong hurried forward and supported Léa, who was getting too heavy for Nicole. The latter explained as they went along the reason for Léa's sudden indisposition.

After a while when she regained her senses, Léa saw that she had been taken to the buffet, and that Chonnebot, Lord Chelsea and Nicole were beside her, anxiously waiting for her to show signs of returned consciousness.

"Is he dead?" the trembling lips could hardly frame the words.

"Madame de Barcy," shouted some one.

"Here," replied Nicole, for Léa was unable to speak or move. A stable lad came forward with a note and anxiously awaited a tip.

"It's from Mr. Ridoire, what? . . . Oh, yes, he's in a nasty mess all right but he'll get better. He was able to write himself on a piece of paper I happened to have in my pocket."

Léa opened the letter. She knew that she need no longer fear for her loved one's life or for her own. Joy filled her heart as she read the message:

"Excuse me," it began, "for not being able to join you at the buffet. I know I shall soon get better if you will only prove me your friendship.

"Your very fervent admirer,

"Lucien Ridoire."

He had been able to add his home address but the ill traced words showed that the effort had been too much for the writer.

Chonnebot watching Lea's face knew that he was no longer wanted and walked slowly away accepting his fate without a murmur.

Nicole had left for the fourth race.

Lea was alone with her thoughts. She wanted to run to Ridoire, to help him get better and to love him with a love that was stronger because she had fought against it.

Life is an obstacle race, happiness can only be achieved after clearing many of the obstacles and Léa had just cleared the water jump.

THE LETTER

Edmond Jaloux

At five o'clock, every day, M. Daniel Kerguiraud received a visit from his son or his daughter-in-law, who took tea with him. If neither of them came, the nurse would bring his little grandson, Urbain, who was five years old, and M. Kerguiraud would tell him stories. He used to lean eagerly over the curly-headed child, striving to find out in what points he resembled his parents, his grandfather and his parents away in the past. They had been dead forty years and no one thought of them but himself; he would soon join them again. When he went to the cemetery, he would look at their grave, and say to himself: "Before long they will open that grave for me. When will it be, I wonder? How many weeks, months or years yet?" A life that is drawing towards its close, is aloof from the living, for old men are more closely associated with the dead than with them. Theirs is a solitary way, apart from the paths trodden by all men. When he was talking to his son, Abel, or to his daughter-in-law, Marthe, he felt that his words were weighed down with a meaning they could never grasp, and he was sorry he could not take more interest in their lives and doings, but his own were so quiet that a barrier was raised between them. He was seventy-five years old.

That day, he felt strangely tired. Although his health was good, he suffered from some ailments at times, but

he never liked to talk about them, for he knew that no one was really interested. So, when Mme. Abel Kerguiraud asked him how he was, he answered, with forced cheerfulness: "I'm as well as I could be."

The young woman was very fond of him; she was kind and sympathetic; like many women, she had those quiet, simple virtues that attract no one's attention, for they permeate the life of the home as thoroughly and as unobtrusively as the sap does the tree.

For a long time, she had wanted to ask her father-in-law a question, but she was afraid lest it should be too indiscreet. Being reserved herself, she hated the idea of violating any one else's reserve. But she thought that M. Kerguiraud looked even more gentle and more dignified than usual that day, so, she made up her mind to risk it.

"Father," she said, "I often think it must be sad for you to be so cut off from your generation. You must feel very lonely often, don't you?"

M. Kerguiraud did not answer immediately; indeed, he was afraid of saying something tactless which might hurt his daughter's feelings.

"I don't feel exactly lonely," he answered in the end, "first of all, because of you, and also because people of my age don't need the company of others. Would you believe it, Marthe, there are some days when I don't know who is living and who is dead among my acquaintances? And I say to myself: 'It's time I wrote to so-and-so, I haven't heard from him for a long time.' And suddenly, I remember that he has been dead ten or fifteen years. In the evenings, when you and Abel have gone home, I live in the society of those I've lost. Oh, it's not

cheerful, but it is dear to me . . . you can't understand it, you're too young. At your age, nothing counts but the present, reality is everything to you, but later on, reality becomes a very flimsy thing, so transparent compared with the unnamed thing that is life. . . ."

He added in a whisper:

"There are some I've lost and I don't know whether they've alive or dead. Perhaps they think of me as I do of them, but I don't know anything certain."

M. Kerguiraud had never spoken in this way to Marthe, and she listened, for she had always thought him more selfish and indifferent than these words proved him. He was afraid he had given himself away too much, and he said in a brighter voice:

"Is Abel coming for you to-night?"

"I don't think so. He told me he had a lot of work to-day. Business is so difficult just now."

"In my time, the competition was not so keen."

"Poor Abel! The least things worry him and upset him. I don't know how many times I have told him not to worry as he does, for we're sure to have enough to live on. But he's ambitious. . . ."

"Yes, of course," said M. Kerguiraud in an absent-minded way. "Money, worry and ambition all belong to youth and middle-age." He understood them no longer; he had forgotten as a grown-up man forgets children's games. The gulf between Abel and his father was just as wide as that between Urbain and Abel, but Marthe, being less limited by actual age than men, tried to bridge the gulf between them.

Now and again, M. Kerguiraud's head sank on his breast and his eyelids closed.

"I'll leave you, father," said Marthe, "I am afraid I've made you tired."

"You don't tire me, child. It's only because of myself. I can hardly believe, now, I was ever alert and strong. The worst of it is that if I had the chance, I shouldn't want to begin again. I haven't enough faith in things to want to begin all over again."

Marthe rose and kissed the old man. He held her hand in his.

"Listen, dear, I'm going to ask you something. I'm nearly at the end now. . . ."

And when the young woman protested, he added:

"I'm not saying that because I want to be consoled. It's the truth, and there's nothing to be done. I should like to know that, after I'm gone, you would speak about me a little to Urbain. Oh, I know it's childish, but just think what little time I've got left to live in your memories. Abel is forty now, in thirty-five or forty years, he will join me. If Urbain doesn't remember me, see, there'll be nothing . . ."

"Don't talk like that, father, you make me shudder."

"Forgive me; you're not accustomed to such ideas. Keep yourself from them as long as you can. But don't forget what I asked you. . . ."

"I promise you."

"Thank you, and now go home quickly. Abel will be getting uneasy. Tell Urbain to come and see me to-morrow. I'll have a nice surprise for him."

"You're spoiling the child, father."

"It's for the sake of the memories, I tell you. And you can be sure life won't follow my example, and spoil him."

He was extremely courteous; so he insisted on going to

the door with his daughter-in-law; then, he went back to sit in his big arm-chair.

. . . . . .

Evening was falling slowly on the port; a warm and misty evening of mid-autumn spreading a golden haze over all things. Smoke was rising from the chimneys and the fiery reflections of the sunset on the windows were like the dying dragon's breath in legends. A square tower showed above the crowded houses and terraces, golden as maize or brown as gingerbread; linen hanging out looked flesh colored in the evening light, and the breeze seemed to give a nervous force to the still landscapes; houses, hospitals and stone forts seemed to share in its magnetic power.

M. Kerguiraud rose from the armchair where he had been dreaming for half an hour, and went to lean out of the window. He looked at the port and at the sea and sighed.

Many years ago, a steamer had left that port, carrying away the woman M. Kerguiraud loved; he had heard nothing of her since. He had married, years after her departure, in the hope of beginning a new life and above all, in the hope of having children. Peace had slowly come into his heart, but forgetfulness never. . . .

He went out of the salon to his bedroom. It was a long, low room, with purple hangings; the bed was of black Chinese lacquer with pale golden roses inside. There was a little polished casket on the table. M. Kerguiraud opened it and drew out several photographs, all of the same face: a fair woman's face, with curly, golden hair, clear eyes that smiled as though they hid some mys-

tery. The features were very finely chiseled. M. Kerguiraud gazed at them for a long time.

He saw again, far away in the past, visions of his youth, and he wondered how he could live now one day after another, expecting no fresh emotion, no new experience.

But imperceptibly, as one day follows another, the vigorous man looking forward fearlessly to the future, was replaced by the old man, lonely and disillusioned, looking with tired and lusterless eyes at the boats he will never embark on again, and thinking of the days he has lived in the past.

On the little square in front of M. Kerguiraud's house, a man was repairing ships in the open air, and the blows of his hammer could be heard, mingling with a popular song he was singing. Several wooden models of ships were lying in a heap of sawdust. A cat was sitting on the gatepost licking itself. The sky was growing dark on either side of the port.

An old servant with a smooth, round face like an apple, came to light the lamps, that still kept their green shades. It was like a night in times past, although the din of cars broke the harmony, for the sea is the same forever, and there is something in a port that makes it changeless. Whether it be the age of the galley, sloop, polacre or liner, the same spirit haunts it.

Then, M. Daniel Kerguiraud drew down the table of his writing desk, dipped his pen in an old China inkwell shaped like a boat, and after reflecting for a moment with his head in his hands, he began to write the following letter, without stopping to re-read or to make any alteration:

"My Dear Friend, it is many years since I wrote to you. I would never believe that I should not see you some time in this world, and yet, when you went away, I knew it was to be forever. Each of us is a prophet, but a prophet deaf to the sound of his own voice. My life is drawing to a close, and when I look upon it, I see you, always you. I have lived the second part of my life apparently a richer and more active man than before, but on my death-bed, I shall be haunted only by memories of my youth, because after reaching a certain age, men only live their past lives over again. I have known men who have only really lived during the last part of their lives; the past was nothing to them. I have often envied them, but I have not the power to be like them. I am one of those people who can only realize themselves once, and after that, they become fossils or begin all over again.

"Just now, when I was looking at the port, I thought of the day you went away never to return. It was raining that day, hard, cold March rain, as I watched you from the pier, going away from me in the liner bound for China. You were thirty-four then. I was thirty-five, and for ten years I had loved you. I used to think of you at all times every day, and you were bound up with all my schemes and actions. Then, suddenly, came the dark days; your husband's failure, your refusal to desert him at the time of distress; your departure. I tell myself, now that I have more experience of the world, that no matter how dear a woman's lover is to her, he cannot fill her whole life; she must give up a part of it to her husband. But, then, I was a romantic bachelor, with my head full of mistaken ideas, and if this idea had ever struck me, I should not have believed it true.

"Then I found that I was lonely, horribly lonely, so lonely that I married. We wrote to one another for a long time, but our letters became few and far between, until they ceased altogether. I don't think it was because we no longer loved one another, but rather because the Laure I cherished, the Laure of the old days, lived in my personality and not away in Shanghai. I was nearer you when I thought of you, as I had known you, than when I wrote to a woman who lived at the other end of the world, growing old among sordid cares. If you ever read this letter, you will be repelled by my selfishness: Alas! Laure, true love is selfish, for that which passes the limits of egotism is a form of saintliness. I suppose all this applies to you, and you have not written, not so much because you have forgotten, as because you wanted to remember me as I was, before I was wedged in by social conventions.

"However, I have heard occasional scraps of news of you from your cousin, Geoffroy, I know your daughter is married and living near you. Your daughter . . . I can see her now with her curls and her smile so like yours.

"I am alone, or the next thing to it. My wife is dead, my son has taken my place. I have a little grandson whom I worship, and I should have liked to have seen him grow up; probably so that I might indulge in melancholy reflections arising from the age of your daughter.

"Do you remember the dinner we had together by the sea, Laure, before you went away? The sorrow of inevitable separation was hovering over us. The window looked out on to the sea and the waves rose and fell before us; we could see the silvery line where the moon touched

the waves, but what we saw was a cruel, moving element that was going to snatch you from me, and divide us.

"Sometimes, it seems to me as though I am still young, and we are still lovers. I wait, not knowing why, but half expecting you to come. If a door creaks, I expect it to open and to see you come through it, proud and graceful, with your slight smile and your furtive air. . . . But that is all over, all over, and I shall never again kiss your hand, nor breathe the fragrance of carnations that is associated with you.

"How quickly it passes, life! Yesterday, you were there, and I held you in my arms, whispering mad lyrics that expressed our desire, although then I believed our souls were in them. Yesterday, I looked forward to the future as if I still expected from it . . . Yesterday? or thirty years ago?

"Ah, Laure, you have made the youth and poetry of my life; marriage and children don't count compared with all that. When you went away, I lost all. I became a mere puppet like the rest of them, without love, without poetry, less a man than a social machine. When you went out of my life, humdrum troubles and cares came into it. Thanks to you, for ten years there was something unforgetable and ethereal in my life; thanks to you, an enchanted spirit prevaded my being, spreading its loveliness and fragrance. This spirit is still there, and it will be there until I die. I will regret it more than anything else. I have to leave. It was through you I entered that mysterious and sacred world of love, which alone makes life worth while, that world of great emotion, of intense grief and of perfect joy. It was the separation from you that drove me away from it. And my last regret is to think

that, after my death, the fairest picture a man could have of you, will vanish for ever. . . .

"You have made me suffer, and you made me happy. I had a thousand dreams of you. . . . Thank you, Laure, for the suffering and for the joys. . . . Will your hand tremble when you read my letter? Won't you think, with tears in your eyes, of so many things that are past, of the hours we spent together, and the places associated with them? Have you forgotten it all? Won't you smile once again at the thought of our long since past youth? Youth is the only thing that counts in the world, and when youth passes, we ought to preserve it with fragrant memories, like a royal mummy. Good-by, Laure, I kiss you. . . ."

M. Daniel Kerguiraud's head fell on to the table; his pen slipped from his fingers.

. . . . . .

When Abel Kerguiraud and his wife arrived hastily, after the old servant had rung them up, the old man was lying on his bed. The doctor turned round when he heard them approach. He was a sarcastic little man, who could not speak without laughing:

"Aneurismal rupture," he said, "and it's all over."

He went to the desk and wrote the death certificate. He looked for a pen and found it under the table; it was not broken.

Abel kissed his father and Marthe was kneeling by the bedside, crying.

The servant came in and said that, as she heard no sounds, she went into M. Kerguiraud's room at ten o'clock

and found him in a faint, with his head on a sheet of paper. She wiped her eyes with her apron.

"He seemed so well this afternoon." said Marthe, "he didn't complain at all."

"He had courage," said Abel, with pride in his voice.

And he went to the desk to see what work his father had been doing at the time of his death. He saw several scattered leaves, collected them, and glanced with amazement through what was written. He read aloud and his voice dropped at the words: "Marriage, my dear, doesn't count. . . . When you went away, I lost all. . . ." His wife read the words over his shoulder.

"Who was he writing that to?" she murmured.

"I don't know. I've heard mother talk of a woman father loved, when he was young. I don't know her name. I wonder if she's the one?

"We must burn it," he added, "these secrets don't belong to us."

He went to throw the papers in the fire in the salon; the flame tried to send them up the chimney, but the charred scraps fell to the ground.

Abel looked at his father with his arms crossed. The lines he had read came back into his mind: what was their real meaning? . . .

"Less a man than a social machine . . . When you went out of my life, humdrum troubles and cares came into it."

He had never before thought of the great mystery that the life of his parents like every one else's hid; the idea of it frightened him and grieved him. Would his son, Urbain, one day, ask the same questions? Had he taken

such a very small place in his father's life? But what place had this courteous and distant father taken in his?

He looked at the old man as he lay stretched out on that autumn night. The flickering candle seemed to bring at times a last smile to the white beard and hollow cheeks.

Still crying, Marthe put her arms round her husband's shoulders.

"Really," he murmured, "my father and I never understood one another."

A KISS IN THE NIGHT

Lydie Lacaze

Jeannine and Marcel had never been introduced to each other. They simply met by chance one day at a Salon.

A mutual "oh!" of admiration had served at the beginning. Her appreciation of the picture was so intense that Jeannine forgot all her principles. She had always made a rule never to listen to anonymous compliments as to her dark-haired beauty.

Nevertheless she did not hesitate to follow Marcel when he invited her to accompany him through the other rooms of the Salon. What strange anomalies are permitted to the human mind.

The young woman had undergone that day likewise the softening influence of autumn, that season of pathetic charm whose secret melancholy is a constant invitation to rebellion. The dark golden leaves fell slowly turning and twisting as they fell before covering with their sumptuous color. There was a bit of a storm in stifling air and the whole day Jeannine had been repeating to herself the verse which began: "Paris sur son visage a serré sa voilette."

She thought sadly of the delights of home life, of the dull glow of lamps, of comfortable easy chairs amidst perfumes and the murmur of a samovar.

Was it because of her dreams that she yielded to temptation? Or was it because of the power of the work of

art which they were both regarding with so much admiration.

Jeannine and Marcel walked side by side.

"You are an artist, Madame?"

"Not exactly, but I am an innate lover of the beautiful, and that alone makes my judgment very keen. And you, Monsieur, you are a painter?"

"No, Madame, I was formerly secretary of the British Embassy. My father a general of the old school, was very anxious that I become a diplomat. And then the great catastrophe came upon the world, and now I am like many others, a victim."

"You were wounded in the war?" she demanded. He gave a nod of assent. She had already remarked that he held his cane in the left hand and that his right hand was horribly deformed.

She looked at him with admiration, respecting his silence. She felt that he was sad, unhappy and her heart was filled with a vast pity, which she could scarcely hide.

He felt a wave of sympathy which made him glance at the young woman and sigh:

"Oh, how good you are."

Jeannine and Marcel saw each other again, at first, from time to time, then oftener.

By common accord, the intervals between their encounters grew less long. They were mutually drawn towards each other, but for different reasons. Jeannine was attracted by a vague sort of feeling that her new friend was a victim of the war. The dreadful cataclysm, which was responsible for the death of her husband, had caused so much unhappiness that she was naturally sympathetic to the suffering of other war victims.

She saw in him a person weary and oppressed; at the end of his courage, moral and physical; her womanly kindness was awakened. She sought with all the devotion of a nurse to ease the suffering of the secret wounds. Would she succeed in curing them?

Marcel, on the other hand, loved whole-heartedly the beautiful young woman, gay, intelligent, kind-hearted, who honored him with her friendship. He felt that he was in the presence of a superior sort of person, but he accepted naturally the magnificent offering of which he was not altogether worthy.

He was flattered to be seen in the company of a young well dressed girl, who had the air of a person used to living well. He was intoxicated by the envious looks of other men. He had not been able to penetrate the veil of mystery with which Jeannine had surrounded herself. He supposed her, however, to be of independent means, leading a life of more or less luxury and belonging to a rank of society which one is proud to admit. And he was not indifferent to this.

The friendship between Jeannine and Marcel had begun on a platonic basis. The young woman had suffered much from love and the intrigues of her admirers. She saw in their friendship only a moral pleasure. Besides, she never forgot her mission.

She tried adroitly to penetrate the soul of her friend. She did not succeed. The ground was as elusive as sand. But with perseverance . . .

One day at a restaurant where they were dining, they began talking. The electric chandeliers made the crystal and silverware shine. There was laughter and gayety about them. The scent of perfume filled the air. The

clink of the champagne bottles was heard from time to time. It was a moment which was conducive to confidences.

Marcel made the observation that it was foolish to say "Monsieur" et "Madame." It made every one look at them. Jeannine said that although it did not matter, she thought he was right. Without further ado, they decided to suppress all formalities and to call each other simply "Marcel" and "Jeannine."

Marcel and Jeannine! It was delightful! With sublime confidence the young woman revealed to him the secrets of her heart, a precious gift which inspired in him a feeling of great happiness. She was a Madonna in the presence of a miracle, whose open hands gave forth fate, hope and joy.

There was no doubt about it. Love had slipped in under the guise of friendship. What a shame. Jeannine felt a pang of regret.

"It was fatal," she thought. "It was inevitable. The two sexes can rarely come in contact without kindling the faithful spark. What a shame!"

The young woman reflected. Her thoughts dwelled upon her married life, that unforgetful period when she was a spoiled child. She had known for several years—all too short, alas!—a happiness almost heavenly. She had known the eternal and divine charm of love at its best!

Death had destroyed all this pitilessly. Jeannine had known grief as she had known joy. She found herself alone in life, bewildered as if she had lost a part of herself.

But the wounded often live in spite of their wounds.

She hid her tears from the world and stoically carried on. She lived in the world but not of the world. Her immortal memories sufficed.

Well, what was the change in all that? Nothing, there was no reason for any difference in her manner of living. One had no right to suppose that a mere feeling of pity could destroy for her the temple or dethrone the god whom she cherished.

What foolishness! She had nothing to worry about. Marcel could not rouse her, whose strong will, hardened at the forge of grief, had struggled and conquered adversity. But even if she felt more human and more vulnerable, she still had confidence in herself. The young man's listless character was certain to prejudice her against him.

There was no reason for fear! It did not matter if Marcel cast passionate glances at her, she would not heed them. Confident of her strength of character, she decided to even make use of her friend's weakness for their mutual profit. Hadn't he told her that he was powerless before her? She would put him to the test. He loved her? She could profit of her force to arouse his latent energy and she would make a new man of him.

. . . . . .

The theater was dark. The violins sent forth their plaintive strains. On the stage, the outlines of the actors contrasted sharply with the light cast by the spotlights. It was an atmosphere of strange charm and illusions. Close to one another in the corner of a box, Jeannine and Marcel were watching a performance of Werther.

The two friends were moved by the beautiful and pathetic music. Each reacted however in his own way.

Their hearts beat together and yet were not one. They held hands but mentally they were far apart.

Jeannine was overcome by the excess of profound passion which was presented before her and which made her remember the sweet hours of a bygone happiness. She thought of the words of love which had once been whispered in her ear and which she had heard with so much joy. Tears of emotion ran down her pale cheeks at the cruel thought "Never again." She experienced an overpowering feeling of sadness and yet as if some perverse influence incited her, she kept repeating "Never again, never again . . ."

She was a prey to the memory of the past.

Marcel on the contrary lived only in the present. He reveled in the dramatic action of the opera. He seemed to find a subtle analogy between the feelings of Werther and his own and he himself was unhappy as was the hero.

But not at all. It was just the contrary. Now, he felt that the object of his affections was close to him. He dreamed strange dreams and his hopes for the future increased. Jeannine tried to be just a chum, a good fellow, and a platonic friend. It was a sham!

Wasn't she after all very womanly, this girl who could not help crying at the sight of an unhappy lover on the stage? Her emotion had unmasked her real self. He thought he understood her now.

Alas, he was wandering in a labyrinth without a guide to show him the way.

When the curtain had fallen for the last time, when the actors had made their last curtsey of acknowledgment of the appreciation of the audience, Jeannine stood up mechanically. Marcel wrapped her heavy fur cloak

around her bare shoulders. A taxi carried them to the young woman's home where he was to leave. They were close to one another in the auto. Marcel tried to speak of his love for Jeannine but his words provoked no reply. He thought that her silence indicated assent and cautiously slipped his arm around the waist of the girl. He grew bold and drew her towards him. Her head was close to his. How beautiful she was in her trusting confidence. Her forehead was pale and bright. Her delicately chiseled nose quivered. Her cheeks were like transparent rose petals. Her huge dark eyes seemed like mysterious wells. Her mouth was like some strange fruit whose sweet juices would tempt the most fastidious. Marcel bent forward eager to taste of its nectar. Suddenly, Jeannine repulsed him and withdrew to the other extremity of the taxi.

"Well, Marcel. What are you thinking about? What did you want to do?" she demanded half angrily.

He tried to take her hands in his.

"Pardon me." he implored. "Jeannine, you know that I love you."

"I do not know. . . ."

"Listen."

"On one condition."

"Yes."

"Change your character. Work. Make something of yourself."

"You will love me?"

"Perhaps."

"I worship you."

. . . . . .

Marcel had made an appointment to meet Jeannine

at the Pavillon de Flore, a café on the Boulevard St. Germain much frequented by students and artists. Here one heard all the languages of the tower of Babel; here one found representatives of all known races.

"Jeannine," he began, "I have asked you to come here because it is here that I live again my life of a student. I have decided to work."

"Really?" she queried.

"You only half believe me."

"But I only hope that I can believe you."

"I'll soon give you the proof. I have already begun to work but I have nothing to show you as yet. It will soon be ready."

"Then, I'll have a nice surprise."

He hesitated for a moment. His features took on a melancholy expression.

"Jeannine, listen to me. I need your compassion. Consider that you are a judge. I am going to unbare my soul. You will admit that I am not obliged to do so. It is an act of humility which I hope you will take into consideration. I have a confession to make to you. I have deceived you."

He took her hand in his.

"Chance was responsible for the deception at first. I followed up the work of Fate because I saw that it gave me more standing in your eyes.

"You thought that I was a victim of the war. I did not even fight. My disability prevented me from fighting."

"So since you have known me, you have lied to me," she said slowly.

"How could I do otherwise since I saw that this fiction caused you to pity me."

"How disgusting you were."

"Forgive me!"

"I can't bear frauds."

. . . . . .

Jeannine experienced a feeling of disillusion. She had given her pity and compassion to some one who had not merited them. Besides, she had probably lost her time. He probably would never change his inert character. Well, she would try at any rate, to put him in the right path.

Two days later, Jeannine returned to the Pavillon de Flore. Marcel greeted her with a mysterious smile. He looked at the young woman with the eyes of a child eager to divulge the secrets of his toys.

She waited a moment before speaking. Then she ventured to ask:

"You are bringing me a surprise."

"Here it is," was the reply.

He drew some sheets of manuscript from his pocket and unfolded them before Jeannine.

"It's our novel, or rather it's the novel of a poor fellow who met his ideal. It isn't really much of a story but under the spell of his dreams, it becomes a work of art."

"I should like it to be a true novel," she said.

"I love you, my dear Jeannine."

"I am proud of you, Marcel. Keep on working."

"I promise you, my beloved."

Jeannine was surprised and rather flattered. The first result was more than gratifying for she knew how much

of an effort it represented for this inert nature. It made her feel more tender for him.

The test continued and Marcel kept on resolutely. Jeannine forgot her displeasure at Marcel's revelation.

. . . . . .

What a change came about.

For several days, Marcel had not shown her his work. He even tried to avoid speaking of it.

"How is your novel getting on?" demanded Jeannine finally, one evening at the Pavillon de Flore where they were in the habit of meeting.

"You are getting impatient, Jeannine?" he queried.

"And you? Are you going to break your promise?"

"I can't, Jeannine, it isn't my fault. Oh, I see that you are already getting angry."

"I can't help it."

"You are displeased with me?"

"Yes, you have taken everything I have. My compassion, my confidence—"

"Your love. Oh, Jeannine, your love. Don't take that from me."

"What a disgrace," she hissed.

"You detest me?"

She did not reply. A barrier had risen between them. The young woman felt alone once more. She had tried to arouse Marcel from his apathy. She had failed. It had only been a mirage. She saw now that it was all useless.

"Jeannine," whispered Marcel, "Jeannine, let me know that you love me."

"Let's go," she replied, getting up from the table.

"Don't accompany me, Marcel," she said decisively.

"As you will," he acquiesced.

"It is late," he added, "look at me once more. When you are gone, it is all dark and you are going to leave me now."

She understood. She kissed him coldly as if he were a distant cousin, the kiss for a prisoner about to die.

Jeannine disappeared in the darkness leaving Marcel alone to wander. . . .

A CAREER

Andre Maurois

I

They used to meet on the third Saturday of every month in Beltara's Studio: there was Lambert-Leclerc, who is Under-Secretary of State for Finances; Civrac, the novelist; Farbt, the author of Caliban-King, which had such remarkable success recently, and Beltara, the artist.

The studio is a big room, and it is the epitome of comfort, with the soft light, the warmth, the settee into which you sink so deep that you would rather talk till morning than drag yourselves away from the blissful ease. One evening, Beltara introduced his young cousin, who had come up from the country to devote himself to writing.

"The boy has written a novel," he told us. "I don't think it's worse than most, but I should like you to read it, Civrac. My cousin knows no one in Paris. He is from Bayeux, and he is an engineer."

"What a blessed state to be in," said Fabert. "You've written a book, you are from the country, and you know no one in Paris. My dear fellow, your fortune is made. There'll be no disputing for the honor of discovering you, and if you build a nice legend around yourself, you'll be more famous than Civrac himself within a year. But, you can take this from me: keep out of sight. . . . Bayeux, a man can't help being sympathetic with any one who comes from Bayeux. Not that you don't appear to

be quite charming, but you know, it is only human to prefer men of genius at a safe distance."

"You ought to contract a disease," said Lambert-Leclerc. "More than one sick man has had a brilliant career."

"And whatever you do," said Beltara, "don't give up your job. There's no better way of observing men than by working with them. If you shut yourself up in a study, within a year, you'll be turning out irreproachable books, quite professional, but as dull as ditch water."

"Ass," said Civrac, in his harsh voice. "Observing men by working with them! How can a man of your intellect repeat such catch words? What do you expect a writer to observe in other people, if he has not got it in himself? Did Proust go out to look for inspiration in others? Did Tolstoi ever leave his own estate? When he asked who was the original of Natacha, he always said that it was himself. And Flaubert . . ."

"Pardon me," said Beltara, "just you read the Memoirs of Count Alexis, and you'll find that Natacha is a true portrait of Tania, the novelist's sister. Tolstoi was one of a big family, and that was one of the sources of his powerful writing. Proust went into society and drew all the inspiration he could from his friends. As for Flaubert . . ."

"Oh, yes! quite," Civrac broke in. "But, if Proust had not his society life to draw on, he would have found something else to say, for he is just as good when he's describing his complaints or his room, or his old servant. Anyhow, I'm going to give you an example to prove that it takes more than a keen intellect, even when coupled with the finest opportunities of observing, to turn out

anything worth while. You remember our friend Chalonnes—who could have had better opportunities or more leisure of observing the most varied types of humanity? Chalonnes knew the ins and outs of the life of artists, writers, business men, actors, politicians, diplomats. In fact, he had seen behind the scenes in every part of the comedy of life. And, in spite of it all, what has he done? That, alas, we know!"

"Chalonnes," interrupted Lambert-Leclerc, "does any one know what has become of Chalonnes? Any news of him at all?"

"We go to the same bookshop," said Civrac, "and I see him there, but he pretends not to see me."

The newcomer asked his host in a stage whisper who Chalonnes was.

"Civrac," said Beltara, "tell the child the story of Chalonnes. At his age it may serve as a useful example."

Civrac roused himself, sat on the edge of the settee, and began to tell the story in his rasping voice:

"I don't know whether you ever heard of the famous sixth Form Classics at the Henri IV Grammar School: It was in 1893, and it was as famous in the Regions of the Panthéon as the great Remove at the École Normale when Taine, Prévost-Paradol, Sarcey and Edmond About were in the same form. This class I'm talking about was a nursery of great men, as one of our old masters always tells me when I see him, for at the same time Beltara, Lambert-Leclerc, Fabert and I were there. Lambert-Leclerc was even then preparing for public life, and he and Fabert used to go off on expeditions in the afternoons."

"Have some respect for my Excellency," said the Minister.

"Your Excellency was the only one whose future career could be safely predicted from his hobbies at that time. Beltara showed no particular taste for drawing, and no one suspected that Fabert had any dramatic talent, for our literature professor used to say to him: 'My dear Fabert, you will never know any French.' Which truthful remark the innocent public of to-day seems to reconsider. Personally, my greatest artistic joy was to sketch Venuses on the margins of my notebooks. Chalonnes completed our group. As a boy he was fair and had bad features. He didn't work much, but he read widely, and his taste in poets and in ties, was so infallible and so discriminating that he wielded a strong influence over us. About that time, we were reading the history of the 'Thirteen' and we decided to establish the Society of Five, we four and Chalonnes. Each of us was always to stand by the others, and the possessions of one—either money, influence or connections—were to be at the service of all. It was a great idea, but only an idea, because we lost sight of one another after leaving school.

"His Excellency and I read for law. Fabert had to earn his living, so he went into his uncle's Bank; Beltara took up medicine. It so happened that we heard scarcely anything of one another for six years.

"It was at the Salon of 1900 that I saw one of Beltara's pictures for the first time. I was surprised to find that he was an artist, and still more surprised when I remarked his talent. It is always a shock to find talent in a school fellow, for men of genius seem unimportant to school

friends. I wrote to him, and he asked me to go and see him, which I did. I liked his studio, and went several times again, and finally, after lengthy correspondence, we arranged a dinner of the Five. There, we each told what we had done since leaving school.

"By a rather strange coincidence, three of us had changed from the careers chosen for us by our parents. Beltara had been in love with a model, and he took to sketching her for his own amusement. Through her, he got to know various artists. He worked and did so well that in a few months he gave up studying medicine.

"Then he went back to his native country in the South, and painted portraits of merchants and their wives at Marseilles, by which means he earned enough to live on when he returned to Paris. The pictures he showed me proved that he had, what art critics, in those days, called 'character.'

"Fabert had written a little play for some amateurs to act at his uncle's house, and he had been very complimented on it by a friend of the family's, an author.

"This good man befriended Fabert, and through him, he had just had his first play accepted at the Odéon. It was called the 'Steppes.' Lambert-Leclerc was Secretary to a Senator of the Ardèche, who had undertaken to procure a good administrative post for him. I had written a few stories. They were most feeble, but I inflicted them on the 'Five.'

"Chalonnes had been listening to us in silence. What he said about my efforts was shrewd, and proved his unerring judgment. He warned me that the subject of one of them was merely a reversal of one of Mérimée's stories and that my style was so like Barrès as to be almost

plagiarism. He had seen Fabert's play, and he pointed out with remarkable feeling for dramatic technic, the scene that needed revising. Beltara took him round the studio, and he discussed the impressionist movement with a masterly way. Then, for the benefit of Lambert-Leclerc, he analyzed the political situation in the Ardèche and showed that his information on the subject was exact. We were re-affirmed in our old impression that Chalonnes was the most brilliant of the group, and it was with sincere humility that we asked him to tell us his story.

"When he was eighteen, he inherited a considerable fortune, and he settled down in a little flat, with his books, and there he began several works, he told us. The first, was to be a great novel, after the style of Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meister,' and it was only to be the first volume of a New Comedy of Human Life. He was also meditating a play which was to have something of Shakespeare, Molière and de Musset in it. You know the kind of thing, fanciful and yet satirical, slight and yet deep. Finally, he had begun a Philosophy of the Mind, allied to Bergson's, but carrying the analyses still further.

"I went to see him, and his flat seemed entirely delightful to me, compared with my refurnished room. The general effect was pleasing artistically, for he had some old pieces of furniture, some casts of statues from the Louvre, a good reproduction of a Holbein, and shelves filled with well bound books.

"He offered me an English cigarette which had a rare aroma. I asked him to show me the beginning of the New Comedy of Human Life, but he had not quite finished the first page. Of his play, he had the title to show. Of the Philosophy of the Mind, not more than a dozen notes.

But he took time to show me a quaint little Don Quixote with charming drawings, which he had just bought second hand; some of Stendhal's autographs, and the catalogs of some picture dealers. I spent the afternoon with him, and found him a delightful companion. The next day, I took Beltara with me, and soon after the other two came as well.

II

"Thus chance had brought together the group of the 'Five,' and we were more closely associated than ever. Chalonnes had nothing special to do, so he saw to that. He often spent whole days in Beltara's studio. He by the way, had become a fashionable painter since his portrait of Mrs. Jarvis, wife of the American Ambassador.

"Many pretty women went to have their portraits painted by him and they took their friends to the sittings or to see the finished portrait. The studio was full of handsome women from the Argentine, fair Americans and intellectual Englishwomen who compared our friend to Whistler.

"Many of these women came because Chalonnes amused them. Beltara soon estimated the value of his friend's power of attraction, which he proceeded to use as a bait. Chalonnes had his own armchair in the studio, with a box of cigars on his right, and a bag of bonbons on his left. He seemed to fill the studio, and it was his task to amuse the model during sittings. He made himself indispensable, for he had a kind of unerring instinct that guided him, in choosing the pose and background most becoming to each type of beauty. He was gifted with a rare sense of harmony in colors, and he would point out

slight shades of yellow or blue that made all the difference to the picture.

" 'Old man, you ought to make an art critic,' Beltara used to tell him, for he was amazed by his versatility.

" 'Yes, I know,' Chalonnes would answer quietly, 'but I don't want to scatter my energies in every direction.'

"In the studio, he got to know Mme. de Thianges, the Duchess de Capri, Celia Dawson, and Mrs. Jarvis. They invited him to dinner. So then, he was a 'man of letters' and a friend of the artist Beltara and they introduced him to their guests as: 'Monsieur Chalonnes, the famous writer. . . .' He became a literary adviser to society women. They took him to their bookshops and begged him to show them what to read. He promised to dedicate one of the novels of his New Comedy of Human Life to each of these women.

"Many of them told him about their lives, for he would say to them:

" 'I wish you would tell me about yourself, because I need to understand the working of a brilliant woman's mind for my book.'

"He was known to be a man of tact and before long many of the choice Paris secrets had been confided to him. When he went into a drawing-room, fascinating women turned to look at him and catch his eye. When women began laying bare their souls before him, they found his psychology remarkable. 'Chalonnes is one of the finest and most all round men in society,' was the verdict.

"I told him that he ought to write a psychological novel, a kind of modern and feminine 'Dominique.'

" 'Yes, quite, I know, I ought to,' he said as though

he were overwhelmed by various duties all of which he could not accomplish, much as he would have liked it, 'but you see, I've got my work to do, and I must concentrate.'

"Fabert often came to the studio to take him to rehearsals, for he had become a great man in theatrical circles, ever since the success of his 'Carnaval.' He used to ask Chalonnes to put himself in the place of the public, and to bring fresh ideas, just when the actors and stage manager were weary enough to give up the whole thing. Chalonnes acquitted himself brilliantly for he seemed to know by instinct, when a scene should be altered, and he could always track down a false note, and invariably knew when a speech was too long.

"The actors were at first annoyed by his intrusion, but they soon came to realize the value of his suggestions in comparison with the playwright, their eternal enemy. They appreciated this man who had no claim to their interest. He became well known before long, in the theatrical world as Mr. Fabert's friend, and eventually by his own name. Managers would offer him a seat, and would be pleased to receive a smile in exchange for it.

" 'You ought to take up dramatic criticism,' said Fabert, 'you're so good at it.'

" 'Oh, quite so,' answered Chalonnes, 'every man has his job.'

"The year when the Members of the 'Five' were thirty-four, I won the Goncourt Prize with 'Blue Wolf' and Lambert-Leclerc went into the House. Fabert and Beltara had been famous for some years. Our circle was in no way broken. Thus, without special effort, the dream of our Grammar School was realized. Our little group

was slowly exerting more and more influence in various spheres. We wielded a certain power in Paris, and it was all the more considerable for not being official.

"I don't deny that a recognized school of artists has advantages over a group like ours. The public associates by habit the reputation of one member with that of the whole group, and the name of the group or school, if well chosen, stems further curiosity. In 1835, a cultured man might have been pardoned for not knowing the name of Sainte-Beuve, but it was impossible to ignore the Romantics.

"Still, there are disadvantages. Decadence as well as greatness, must be shared by each member, and doctrines and manifestoes are easy targets for those who want to shoot.

"We however did not pursue the same career, so that no jealousy came between us. Our society was pleasant and our admiration mutual. As soon as one of us went into a new circle in society, he described the others with so much enthusiasm that he was invariably asked to bring them with him. Most men are so essentially idle that they always accept their scale of artistic values from an expert who provides it for them. Fabert must be a great dramatist, since I said it, and 'I was the most profound novelist' because Fabert said I was. When we gave our Venetian fête eighteenth century style, in this studio, we had no difficulty in bringing together every one worth knowing in Paris. It was a wonderful night, that; lovely women acted one of Fabert's comedies in Beltara's setting, and yet, it was Chalonnes who was the master mind behind it all. At least, our guests thought so. He had leisure and great charm. He had naturally become the

leader of our group, and when mention was made of—'Your charming friend'—we knew that it was Chalonnes.

"Still, he did nothing. I don't mean by that neither his book, his play, nor his philosophy, was finished but he produced not a line. He had never written an article for a periodical; he had never spoken in public. It was not because no one would publish what he wrote, because he was a personal friend of some of the best editors. It was not because he preferred to remain a spectator. No, he had a natural desire for fame. It was the effect of various temperamental tendencies: innate indolence, a sporadic curiosity about everything and an entire lack of resolution. He was too intellectual, too versatile. An artist has always some weakness, and this keeps him aloof from the actual, and gives a detached attitude towards life. He was perfectly satisfied. His complete idleness reflected his passive contentment.

"Nevertheless, there was scarcely a writer who did not consider him a colleague. Most authors sent him their books. As each of us advanced in fame, Chalonnes advanced too, and he always shared the honors we won. We were very careful, lest his self-respect should be undermined by any chance, just as a man, who has received an undeserved promotion, strives to share his good fortune with an old school friend.

"We saw that we were becoming the center of a group of younger men who came to seek our help. Chalonnes was 'Our Dear Master' to them, because he lived with us as an equal. It was a prudent generation. Among themselves, they may have asked: 'What has he written then? Have you ever read anything of his?' Sometimes, some

one inconsiderate would compliment him on the 'Blue Wolf' or 'Caliban-King.'

"'Pardon me!' Chalonnes would answer haughtily, as though he was rather offended, 'it's good stuff, but it is not mine.'

"Out of the Five of us, he was the only one who would willingly undertake to read manuscripts and give his wise and unerring judgment.

"His unearned fame increased so slowly and so naturally that it astonished no one. We should have been surprised and shocked if any one had neglected to invite our friend to one of the official gatherings of 'Men of art and literature.' Not that he ever was forgotten. Sometimes, when he came across some unknown artists, living alone in poverty, neglected alike by the public and by the State, we would reflect for a moment on the strange paradox of the success of Chalonnes. We would reflect that it was perhaps cruel, but, what was to be done? It has always been so. However, the other man is a genius, so he has the finer thing.

"One morning, when I was going to lunch with him, I saw a diffident youth in the corner; he was going through some old magazines. Chalonnes introduced him: 'My Secretary.'

"He was quite a nice boy who had just left school. A few days later, Chalonnes told us that he was paying him three hundred francs a month, and confessed that it was rather stiff for him. 'But,' he added resignedly, 'it's so difficult for men like ourselves to do without a Secretary.'

III

"The war brought about changes in every one's life. Beltara was in the Dragoons, Fabert in the Air Force at Salonika, Lambert-Leclerc was wounded, returned to public life, and secured an Under-Secretaryship. Chalonnes was in the infantry, until he was recalled to do some propaganda work.

"When we were demobilized, he helped Fabert and me, for we had lost touch with people during our absence, while he had formed new connections and had got to know influential men. Beltara had been officially honored for his military services and Fabert too. Lambert-Leclerc secured me a place in the first civil promotion list after the armistice. The Five gave me a delightful little dinner in one of the Russian restaurants that were springing up in Paris at the time of the Revolution. There was a band playing Bohemian airs, and it may seem the plaintive music, if there was no deeper reason, which led me to think that Chalonnes seemed rather sad.

"I came away from this restaurant with Fabert, who lived in the same part of town as I, and when we were going up the Champs-Elysées, on a glorious winter night, we could not help discussing Chalonnes.

" 'Poor Chalonnes!' I said, 'you know it must be hard at his age to look back to a past that is quite empty.'

" 'Do you think he realizes it?' Fabert asked me. 'His lack of discernment is superb.'

" 'I don't know. I rather think he lives on two plans. When things go well with him, and he has plenty of invitations and social life, he forgets that he has done nothing to deserve it all. But at the bottom of his heart, he

cannot but know the truth. The anxiety is always there and it must come to light at times. On an occasion like to-night, when you referred so neatly to my work and I tried to correspond, how could he but see that there is nothing to say about his?'

" 'But, it is inconceivable that a man should be entirely without ambition and, consequently, without jealousy.'

" 'Certainly, but I don't think that is the case with Chalonnes. Either a man must be excessively modest and tell himself: "These things are not for me," or else he must be very proud and think: "I don't want them." Chalonnes wants the same things as every ambitious man. Truly, it's a pitiful state of affairs.'

"We discussed it for a long time, treating the question with a certain complacency. Besides such a sterile record as his, we realized our own fecundity and we pitied Chalonnes.

"The next day, Fabert and I went to see Lambert-Leclerc at the Ministry.

" 'We want to discuss a scheme,' I told him. 'We thought of it last night after we had left you. Don't you think it must be disagreeable for Chalonnes to see us honored, the four of us, and to be out of it all himself? You say it is a matter of no importance. Nothing matters as far as that goes, but even if it is only a symbol of no importance, why hasn't Chalonnes received honors like other people?'

" 'I'm quite willing,' said Lambert-Leclerc, 'but he must have the right to it.'

" 'What?' protested the Minister from the depth of the settee. 'I'm not guilty of such a platitude.'

" 'There must be at least some appearance of a right to it.'

" 'It may be,' said Lambert-Leclerc. 'I was not at the Beaux-Arts and I hadn't a free hand, but I told you that if Chalonnes had cared to come along to the recruiting department, I could have done something for him easily.'

" 'It was stupid,' said the novelist, going on with his story, 'but I admit you didn't insist upon it. Chalonnes got his chance, and when I was asking him to sign the request, I thoughtlessly said that we had had some difficulty in contriving it. I was rather annoyed with him for he seemed to take the whole thing for granted.

" 'Really!' he said, 'I should have thought that it would have been quite easy.'

" 'Yes, if you had the right.'

"His astonishment was so manifest that I changed the topic."

. . . . . .

"His friends and admirers offered him a little dinner. Lambert-Leclerc had brought the Minister of Education, a man of great ability. There were two Academy men, some actresses and some society people. The general atmosphere was all that could be desired. Man is quite a benevolent creature when he is neither jealous nor anxious.

"Chalonnes stood in no one's light, so he had every one's sympathy and good will, and every one was glad to work together to increase his happiness. Every one knew that, in hard fact, this hero was nothing more than the fiction they had created round the man. They liked him, because his existence and fortunes depended on their good-will, and the taste of power was very sweet. Louis

XIV loved men who owed everything to him, and there are many who share this kingly characteristic.

"During dessert, a poet read some charming lines. The Minister gave a little speech on nothing in particular; he spoke of the deep influence exerted by Chalonnes on contemporary French literature, of his conversational ability, of Rivarol, and of Mallarmé. Every one stood up and applauded. Then Chalonnes responded in a graceful and modest speech. There was a kindly sympathy pervading the whole atmosphere, and nothing occurred to mar the good will manifested.

"On the way out I took Chalonnes in my car and said to him:

" 'It wasn't bad.'

"He smiled happily.

" 'Not at all. And what pleased me above all was that I felt every one was so sincere.'

"He was right."

IV

"Such was the career of Chalonnes, as straight and splendid as that of a statesman; without a blemish or a check, for it is the privilege of a nonentity to be perfectly invulnerable.

"We anticipated the honors that would fall to our friend's lot: some even mentioned the Institute. The Duchess of T— had suggested it timidly to an Academy man who was great on electing new members, and he answered: 'We have it in mind, but it is a little premature as yet.'

"Chalonnes manifested by his very expression the undisturbed serenity of pure wisdom or of absolute inanity,

which qualities perhaps tend to merge into one another.

"It was about this time that Mrs. Pecks began to be interested in him. Gladys Newton Pecks was an American, wealthy and attractive, and like most wealthy and attractive Americans, she spent the greater part of her time in France. She had a flat in the rue François ler Premier, and a house in the South of France. Her husband was President of the Universal Rubber Company, and of several railways. He spent only his holidays in France.

"We had all known Gladys Pecks for a long time, as she was a zealous devotee of modern art, literature and music. She had been interested in Beltara at the beginning of his career; she had bought his pictures, had had her portrait painted by him, and had recommended him to her friends. For two years Beltara was her chief topic of conversation. She gave Beltara dinners, organized Beltara exhibitions, and finally invited him to spend a winter at her house in the South, where he could work in peace.

"Then, he gained success, and Mrs. Pecks lost interest in successful men. She is a remarkably shrewd woman, but, with all her love of art, she retains a trace of the attitude of speculators on the Exchanges who fight shy of steady values, and take up concerns that are not known to the public; while they themselves have always reliable, first-hand information. Such was Mrs. Pecks. She liked authors without an editor; the unknown dramatist whose plays are never produced more than three times; the musician of Eric Sati's type before he was surrounded by a group of disciples, or the scholar who specializes in some abstruse subject like religious books of India or early Chinese painting.

"However, she does not patronize men of little or mediocre talent, for she is astute, and she has taste. But, it is possible to pass by the best in avoiding the common-place. I don't imagine that Gladys Pecks cares for Tolstoi or Balzac. She has perfect taste in dress and goes to one of the best houses in Paris, but no matter how lovely a frock may be, she will not wear it if she knows that it has been copied. She treats writers and artists in the same way. She loses interest as soon as her friends become enthusiastic.

"I believe I am responsible for putting her on Chalonnes' track. I was sitting next to her one night at dinner, at Helen de Thianges' house. We happened to be discussing him, and I said:

" 'No, he's nothing published, but he has great schemes, and even outlines of some books he intends to write some day.'

" 'You have seen them?'

" 'Yes, but I can't tell you much about them, for they are mere notes.'

"I had not said this on purpose, but it was just the very thing to entice Mrs. Pecks. Straightway after dinner, she made for Chalonnes who was there in a corner, and in spite of Helen's efforts, she didn't leave him all evening. I observed them from a safe distance. 'I ought to have foreseen that,' I said to myself. . . . 'Surely Chalonnes is the ideal author for Gladys Pecks. She is always on the look-out for the unpublished treasure and the neglected author, and what could she have better than Chalonnes who has no public at all, and who has never published a book because he has never written anything? The chemist who creates a rarefied atmosphere tends towards the

vacuum. In the same way, Gladys Pecks so rarefies her friends' work as to leave mere nothingness. That, she has in Chalonnes. They are admirably suited to one another, and I'm sure I've made them both happy.'

"Indeed, the next day marked the beginning of the Chalonnes episode in Gladys Pecks' life. It was arranged that he should dine with her three times a week, that she should see his MSS., and that she should take him to La Napoule for the winter, so that he might work in peace. For some days, I rather dreaded what would happen when Gladys Pecks saw Chalonnes' MSS., for I thought they were too slight, even for her, but that was weakness and mistaken judgment on my part. She was enthusiastic from the beginning—'There is more in this . . . more substance,' she said, 'in your friend's scheme than in all the volumes of Henry James.' Things were going well.

"This intellectual honeymoon lasted about two months, and during this time Gladys Pecks announced that she was about to have the works of a neglected author published. It was Chalonnes. She had found an editor. She was looking for some one to translate into English. She introduced Chalonnes to all the distinguished foreigners who went through Paris—George Moore, Pirandello, Hoffmansthal, Sinclair Lewis. Having done her share of the work she asked Chalonnes to produce something.

"She would be content with the slightest essay or study, if it was only a few pages. Naturally, Chalonnes had worked no harder during these two months than at any other times, so he had nothing to offer, as he told her with perfect equanimity. But Gladys Pecks was not the woman to leave genius in peace. Ten times in her life had

she taken up unknown men, in their days of poverty, and in a few months, she had transformed them into famous and cringing men, whose society was sought by all. But they had all possessed the inexplicable gift of writing, painting or composing, even though they had not the confidence to win their own way to the front. Nothing gave her more pleasure than to be the cause of these changes, and she had, rightly, great confidence in her powers of discrimination. She had undertaken to bring out Chalonnes, and whether he would or no, Chalonnes must needs produce something.

"I don't know how it came about, whether by flattery, or promises (I don't think it was coquetry, because Gladys Pecks was invariably aloof and chaste), but, Chalonnes came to see me one day:

" 'I want your opinion,' he said. 'Gladys Pecks wants to give me the run of her house at La Napoule for the winter, so that I can work in peace. Frankly, I tell you I'm not at all bent on leaving Paris . . . and just now I don't seem to be in form. . . . Only, it would please her, and she is taken up with the idea of my novel, and even for me, it is rather tempting to think that I might get it done in a few months of peace and quietness.'

" 'Getting it done' struck me as being rather a curious expression to apply to a novel which was not yet begun, but as Chalonnes said it all in good earnest, I refrained from passing any remark.

" 'Well,' I said, 'I'm delighted. Mrs. Pecks is quite right; you have great ability, and every day you waste whole chapters of a potential, brilliant novel in mere talk. If you express what we all know you have to say, in that

atmosphere of confidence and admiration, then we shall all be glad. Accept the opportunity, old man, it would please me . . . it would please us all.'

"He thanked me, and a few days later, he came to tell me that he was going. We received only a few cards from him during the winter, and in February I went to see him at La Napoule."

. . . . . .

"The Pecks have a very fine house. It is a little château overlooking the bay. It is quite Provençal style and they have had it restored. The contrast between the wild approaches, the forbidding outside appearance, and the almost incredible comfort inside, is more like fairyland than reality. They have terrace gardens, most ingeniously contrived because they have to be supported by great concrete blocks, as they are on the side of a rock. The Pecks spent a great deal of money in procuring cypresses from Italy, to frame this delightful and artificial landscape with their fine foliage.

" 'Ah, my dear fellow,' said Chalonnes when he welcomed me, 'I didn't know what work was, before. Now, I enjoy writing. I'm swamped with ideas; they surround me, they make me giddy. My pen can't run quickly enough to record the pictures, the memories and thoughts that swarm in my mind. Do you find it like that?'

"I confessed humbly that I found such crises of wealth rare, and added that he would naturally have accumulated stores of observation and material during his long years of silence, whereas we had been writing more or less continually.

"I spent the evening with him, for Mrs. Pecks was still in Paris, and he was alone. I found him changed. One

of his greatest charms had always been the variety of his conversation. Having little time to read myself, I valued Chalonnes, because he read everything and brought to my notice the most interesting of the younger generation. As he was out every night, either at theaters or in society, he knew all there was to know about the intimate dramas and amusing gossip of Parisian life. Above all, I always felt that I could talk to Chalonnes about myself and my own work, and that he was really interested and forgetful of himself while listening to my conversation. All this was very pleasant.

"Now, the Chalonnes I met at La Napoule was altogether different. He had not opened a book for two months, and had seen scarcely any one. He spoke of absolutely nothing but his novel. I told him a little news about our friends, and he listened for a moment, then brought out a little book, and took a note.

" 'What are you doing?' I asked him.

" 'Oh, nothing much. An idea struck me for my book, and I don't want to miss anything.'

"The next moment when I was telling about one of Beltara's models, the notebook came out again.

" 'What, again! You've got a craze.'

" 'You see, one of my characters is in some respects rather like Beltara. What you have first told me may come in useful for me.'

"He was consumed with the zeal of converts, and yet he seemed terribly professional. I had brought some chapters of my next book to read to Chalonnes, so that I could hear his opinion of them, but it was impossible to get him to listen, and I decided that he had become an intolerable bore. Finally, he enraged me by speaking

of the masters we had always respected in a tone of scorn and contempt.

"'That amazes you, does it?' he said, 'but after all, Stendhal's stuff is journalistic, both the Chartreuse and Rouge & Noir. It could be done better, you know. . . .'

"I was almost glad to leave him."

V

"When I came back to Paris, I realized that Gladys Pecks had excellent managing ability. There was talk already of Chalonnes' book and it was spoken of with respect, without any trace of the noisy publicity that drives away the fastidious. It seemed as if this woman had found the secret of true advertising, and that she could make a name known when and as she liked. Paul Morand said wittily enough of her, that she had opened the hermit's cell.

"I was asked by every one: 'You have been South? Have you seen Chalonnes? It seems that he's written a remarkable book.'

"Gladys Pecks spent March at La Napoule, and told us that the book was almost finished, but Chalonnes had not been willing to show it her. He said that his work formed a complete whole, and that it would spoil it to show odd fragments.

"Finally, at the end of April, we learned that Chalonnes was coming back to Paris, and that she would like us to meet some Saturday evening at her house, as Chalonnes wanted to read the book.

"That reading! I don't believe any of us will forget it in his life. The drawing-room of the flat in the Rue

François ler had been perfectly arranged as a setting. All the lights were put out except one big Venetian lamp which shed a softened light on the author, the MSS. and a lovely spray of blossom placed in a Chinese vase behind Chalonnes. The telephone had been cut off. The servants had been told not to disturb us on any account. Chalonnes was nervous, his gaiety forced and even inane, while Mrs. Pecks was radiant and triumphant. She saw to his comfort, gave him a glass of water and fixed the lamp-shade; he put on tortoise-shell spectacles, cleared his voice and began to read.

"At the end of the first ten sentences, Fabert and I looked at one another. In some arts, it is possible to err when adopting a new style, and a false judgment can be pardoned at times, but a writer reveals himself in the first few words. The question of the value and logic of his ideas, and the substance of his plot can be discussed: but either he has a style, or he has not. Now, straightway, we perceived the worst: Chalonnes could not write. He wrote childishly, and yet without the natural simplicity of a child, for his writing was insipid and inane. We might have expected an involved style from a man of his culture and intellect. On the contrary, what we heard was a milkgirl's tale with a dull didactic flavor. The lack of form was evident from the beginning, and we soon discovered there was a similar lack of subject matter. We looked at one another in despair. Beltara shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly, and looked at me as though to say: 'Would you believe it?' Fabert shook his head; he seemed to be muttering: 'Is it possible?'

"I looked at Gladys Pecks, wondering whether she realized the value of what we were hearing. She had

listened complacently at first, but soon she became uneasy, and from time to time she looked at me with a questioning air.

" 'But what a catastrophe!' I thought. 'What are we to say to him?'

"The reading lasted rather more than two hours, during which time none of the listeners spoke a word. An impossible book is such a pathetic thing—so transparent in its childish lack of skill. The author's intentions may be excellent, but I felt, while I was listening to Chalonnes, that he must be the victim of melancholy and suppressed emotion. I could not help thinking that it would be amusing to write a book in which the hero writes a bad novel—for this Chalonnes' text would serve. It shed new light on his character, and his pathetic tones of tenderness, as he read, recalled the touching, but absurd, love of a monster.

"When he had finished there was a pause, and we all hoped Gladys Pecks would save the situation. After all, she was at home, and she had been eager to arrange this reading, but she seemed gloomy and hostile. Beltara, being from the South, possesses wonderful presence of mind and he saw that he would have to come to the rescue, so he produced the usual kind of speech.

"He declared that we were probably too overcome with emotion to speak, and he thanked Mrs. Pecks, for without her this fine book would never have been written. He turned towards me and said: 'Civrac will no doubt be pleased to take it to his editor.'

" 'Oh, yes,' I said, 'mine or another. I had an idea that Mrs. Pecks . . .'

" 'Why any other editor?' asked Chalonnes quickly. 'No, yours is right enough, and he knows what he is doing. If you would like to take me there, I should be glad.'

" 'Certainly, nothing easier than that.'

"Mrs. Pecks' silence was becoming painful. She rang for orangeade and biscuits, but she did not speak. Chalonnes was trying to find more reason for his happiness.

" 'What did you think of Alice as a character?'

" 'Admirable,' said Beltara.

" 'Don't you think the reconciliation scene is true to life?'

" 'It's the best scene,' said Beltara.

" 'Oh, no, I don't think it's the best,' said Chalonnes. 'The best is . . . perhaps the meeting of Georgina and Silvio.'

" 'You are right there,' said Beltara, in a conciliating way. 'It is still more pleasing.'

"It was dreadful. Mrs. Pecks took me into a corner and said:

" 'Be honest, please. It's absurd, isn't it? Quite absurd?'

"I made a sign in the affirmative.

" 'But, how can it have happened?' she went on. 'If I had thought . . . but, he seemed so brilliant. . . !'

" 'He is brilliant, Mrs. Pecks. But if you knew how difficult it all is: the creative instinct is so entirely different from critical ability. It is very easy to be deceived like this.'

" 'No, no,' she said, 'it's unforgivable. It must not be published. After all I have said about it. . . . He must be told that it's shameful and stupid.'

" 'Do wait a little. You'll do more harm than you know. To-morrow I will try to see what I can do when I am alone with him.'

"The next day, when I made the first attempt to criticize some detail, Chalonnes greeted my slight remark with such anger and scorn that I lost courage. Experience has taught the folly of such tasks: it would only be a repetition of Act I of Molière's 'Misanthrope.'

" 'I maintain that my verses are very good.' That would be the answer I should hear, and I should not have the heart to reply. It would be better to beat a hasty retreat immediately. I went out with the MSS., under my arm, and took it to an editor without making any comment. I simply said it was Chalonnes' book.

" 'Really,' he said, 'Chalonnes' book? I am delighted to have it, for I have heard so much about it. I'm very grateful to you for having thought of me. Do you think it would be as well to draw up a ten years' contract?'

"I recommended him to wait a little, and nursed a secret hope that he would read the book and refuse it. But my name and Chalonnes' were enough. He sent the book to the press without even reading it, and the news of this consoled Chalonnes a little for the changed attitude of his protectress.

"Mrs. Pecks had waited three days to see what would happen when I took the book to my editor. When she heard the result, she reproached me severely for my weakness and wrote Chalonnes a dry letter, which he showed us indignantly the next day. What Mrs. Pecks said was true but Chalonnes was amazed by it; and he tried to find some motive to explain such an unfair judgment. She was not a writer, so jealousy could not be the cause. In

the end, he struck an idea, which was quite ridiculous, but it consoled him and saved him from any humiliation. He came to the conclusion that Mrs. Pecks had recognized herself in the character of an absurd Englishwoman in his book. Whereupon, he thought no more about Gladys Pecks."

VI

"Three months later, the book appeared.

"The press was not too harsh in its criticisms, for every one liked Chalonnes too much to give him unnecessary pain. Friendly critics mentioned the book among a number of others; impartial critics were silent about it.

"But the public was more brutal, and spoken criticism was heard everywhere within a remarkably short time. For some days, every one I met said to me:

" 'And Chalonnes'? Have you seen it? Impossible, it shouldn't be allowed.'

"In a month, all Paris knew that it was not worth while reading Chalonnes' book. In the windows of bookshops the bright yellow covers became a pale lemon color, and then gradually dirtier and dirtier until they were black. At the end of the year, the edition came back almost complete to the editor. He lost fifteen thousand francs and Chalonnes accused him of having stolen them.

"For failure had embittered him. He divided humanity into two classes now: 'Those who were decent about my book,' and 'those who were not.'

"This made social life rather difficult, for when a dinner was being arranged and guests were being invited, 'Not that man,' Chalonnes would say, 'I can't endure him.'

" 'Why,' said Fabert, 'he's quite witty and he's not a bad sort.'

" 'Isn't he?' Chalonnes would answer. 'He didn't write to me about my book.'

"The man who had been so charming and so modest became insufferably vain. He always carried about with him a short cutting praising his book, and read it to any one he met. It was a paragraph from a paper to which I contributed and I had had great difficulty in getting it inserted.

"When any critic mentioned the most talented novelists of our generation, and left him out, he would be surprised and would say:

" 'This fellow Bidou is no good,' or 'I shouldn't have thought Jaloux would have done that.'

"Before long, just as madmen think first they are being persecuted by all their neighbors and friends, and then that their wives and children are their bitterest enemies, so Chalonnes took it into his head that the Five had been unfair to him, and he gradually drifted away from us.

"It may be that in new surroundings, where he was not known, he would have regained the confidence that we had had in him for so long. Three times in succession, he missed our meetings. Beltara wrote to him twice but received no reply, so I was commissioned to visit him as ambassador of the Four.

" 'Because after all,' we said, 'it isn't the poor blighter's fault if he hasn't any ability.'

"I found him at home and he received me coldly.

" 'No, the truth is,' he said, 'men are like sheep and you are no better than the rest of them. While I was merely a faithful admirer, always ready to advise, you

were my friends, but, as soon as I went in for creative work, you especially thought I was a possible rival and you took good care to be quiet about my book.'

" 'Look here,' I said, 'if you only knew what I tried to do for you. . . .'

" 'Yes, I know, there are people who do their worst for their friends, and then pay homage to the departed!'

" 'But, Heavens above, Chalonnes! That's too bad of you. Do you remember the day when you came to tell me that you were thinking of going to La Napoule? You wanted to work, but you were still wavering and you would have stayed in Paris, if I had advised you, but I encouraged you to go. . . .'

" 'Precisely,' he said, 'that's just what I can't forgive you, or Gladys Pecks either.'

"He rose and went towards the door, and opened it to show me that the interview was over. The last thing he said was:

" 'You have bungled my career.' "

"And the best of it is," said Beltara, "that he was right."

SENTENCED TO DEATH

Pierre Mille

Landru's exploits made a deep impression at the penal settlement in Cayenne. If you stop to think a minute you will realize that it could not be otherwise: when, after having taken one's neighbor's life, one has escaped death by a hair's breadth; when, after having taken all possible precautions that prudence could suggest in order to avoid the consequences of a crime, one finds oneself notwithstanding arrested by the police, adroitly questioned by a judge, condemned by a jury this time implacable, every new scheme evolved for escaping the supreme penalty, allowing a doubt to creep in, if one is caught, which will save one's life by getting rid of the fatal proof—down there, in Guyane, three thousand thoughtful convicts know how to appreciate one's work at its true value; in their own way they are artists, they know by experience how rare is originality and how difficult it is even to perfect the old methods.

"And to think," objected Sicougnot, a cultured man of the world, who had received a life-sentence for poisoning his wife, "to think that if he had stopped, if he had known how to stop at his eleventh fiancée, he would never even have been discovered! But there you are, genius knows no limits, and the story of Landru is merely the story of Napoleon!"

"That is all very well," said Maltrat, another "lifer,"

"but he has got a good chance of not having it cut off, and coming here. That's something! And we will give him a warm welcome. He deserves it. A man of that type is an honor to the company."

But Pietr' Athanasi, a Corsican, sentenced after twelve murders, who prided himself on never thinking like anybody else, announced suddenly:

"There is somebody here even more wonderful than Landru! You have never noticed him; you have not done him justice."

"We despise justice," replied Sicougnot, the man of the world, "and believe we have the right to do so, but we always honor fair-play. We are always ready to render homage to talent; but really, after looking carefully round for the person to whom you allude, I can find nobody worthy of such praise."

"It is Cardevaque," interjected Athanasi in a firm voice.

A mocking laugh followed this remark. Every one knew Cardevaque—a fat insignificant looking man of a prying and meddlesome disposition who assisted the priest at Mass; and the latter, by way of reward, had made him orderly at the hospital. At the penitentiary those who know how to win favors are not popular.

"Cardevaque is a commuted death sentence," replied Pietr' Athanasi, "and if you had asked him about the trick by which he got it commuted you would salute him when you meet him. Or rather you would be jealous, for you would never have had, the whole lot of you together, brains enough to think of it."

Such a scathing indictment could not fail to anger Sicougnot. He laughed disdainfully. But the others, who had little sympathy for this "gentleman," agreed to inquire

into the case, and it was decided to question Cardevaque himself.

Athanasi went in search of him. He arrived with modest mien, as was right and proper before such a notable gathering; but, when requested to tell his story he did not wait to be asked twice.

"Like Landru," he said, "I was a choir-boy in my childhood. . . ."

"Ha, ha!" murmured Sicougnot.

On one hand he professed to hate priests, but at the same time he considered them capable of instilling far-reaching and brilliant ideas into the minds of their pupils.

"Oh, it's not what you think," confessed Cardevaque very softly. "There was nothing particularly clever about my deed. Quite otherwise: I killed a woman with a fire-iron; I took no trouble to hide either my responsibility, my guilt or the fact that it was premeditated. The journalists labeled me as a rough and brutal criminal; I was condemned unanimously by the jury, and my petition for mercy rejected."

"But you were commuted. . . !" protested Sicougnot.

"Don't interrupt," said Athanasi, "wait and see, we are just coming to the best part of the story."

"I was sentenced in March," continued Cardevaque, "and that year Easter fell in April. When reading 'The Pictoresque Magazine' (Le Magasin pittoresque) and 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea' (Vingt mille lieues sous les mers), and while playing cards with my warders, I was thinking all the time: 'Please God, they don't take my life before Holy Week! Please God, they don't think of it; and that afterwards they act quickly!' "

"What could that matter to you? Before it would be

tiresome, but afterwards meant so much time gained!" said Sicougnot.

Athanasi chuckled.

"Your reasoning is as good as a peacock's."

Sicougnot looked at him sideways. But, silencing them with a gesture, Cardevaque continued.

"I had luck, great luck. Tuesday and Wednesday before Easter passed—nothing! They let me sleep peacefully. On Holy Thursday, at daybreak, according to custom, the door of my cell opened and I saw entering the Public Prosecutor, the Chief of Police, old man Paris, his assistants, my counsel and the priest. I scrutinized the face of the priest, and how embarrassed he was looking! He was trembling in every limb.

" 'Good,' said I to myself, 'you will tremble a great deal more very soon.'

"But why?" interrupted Sicougnot.

"You will see. It all began as usual. The Public Prosecutor said to me, 'Courage! Your petition has been refused.' I replied, 'I have courage.' I lit a cigarette, and then addressed myself politely to the priest, 'Father, I want to confess.' He consented of course, it was his business, but I could see he had cold feet, and I added immediately, '. . . and also hear mass.'

"Then he paled, spluttered, and turning towards the big-wigs standing around, he cried, 'I told you so! I told you so! My God! My God!' And the big-wigs cried in their turn, 'But it is absurd, Padre, it's absurd. There must be some way? . . .' But he shook his head, whilst I, inwardly shaking with laughter, stood with my hands joined together and the air of a penitent.

" 'I warned you,' said the priest. 'If this man—I was

going to say unfortunately, but I haven't the right—asks me to celebrate mass for him, it will be impossible, impossible! Mass is never performed on Holy Thursday. The rules of the Church authorizes only one celebration that day which takes place in each parish at a certain set mass. I cannot celebrate mass! I cannot!'

" 'Well,' declared the Public Prosecutor in a very bad temper, 'if you can't the condemned man must do without it.'

" 'I have not the right to celebrate mass,' said the priest, 'but you have not the right to send this unfortunate man into the next world without hearing it, if it is his desire to do so. It is a sacred custom which has always been respected. You may take the body but you cannot damn the soul. I solemnly protest against it.'

" 'Well,' said the Public Prosecutor, 'to-morrow, Friday. It is contrary to custom to execute a condemned man twenty-four hours after he has been warned, but what else can one do!'

" 'I can still less celebrate mass on Good Friday than on Holy Thursday,' replied the priest with tears in his eyes. 'And Holy Saturday is like Thursday and Friday.'

" 'Sunday, then,' suggested the Chief of Police timidly, for he considered that it was already very late.

" 'Sir,' said old man Paris to the Chief of Police, 'Sunday is a holiday; executions cannot take place on holidays.'

" 'But, damn it all,' groaned the Public Prosecutor, 'Easter Monday is a holiday too, legally. Oh, hell!'

"He was swearing in order to intimidate the priest, but there was no need of that.

" 'Listen, Cardevaque,' said the Public Prosecutor,

turning towards me, 'do you really need to hear mass? It is a natural idea, and quite touching on your part, but come! Do you look upon it as absolutely indispensable?'

" 'Sir,' I replied, 'that is my feeling about it.'

" 'That's a bright idea of yours,' fumed the magistrate, and he swore again, thoroughly exasperated. 'A rogue, an assassin, who has not even the courage to die as he has lived. An avowed anticlerical,—for I know your record, and you can't deny it,—who goes back on the convictions of his whole life at the hour of his death. One can't depend on anything nowadays, nobody stands by their convictions, and justice is no longer possible. Look here, Cardevaque, be a sport! It will be in the newspapers that you died as an honest unbeliever, refusing the aid of religion.'

" 'Sir,' I answered, 'I should be glad to do you this favor, but it would pain my mother too much.'

" 'Oh, well, till Tuesday then, as there is no other way out of it,' concluded the Public Prosecutor disgustedly.

" 'You are putting it off until Tuesday,' said my lawyer, who had been silent up till then. 'But I shall present a second appeal for mercy to the President of the Republic. Who in the world, even if he had the heart of a tiger, still less our venerated and benevolent Chief of State, would be capable of such ferocious cruelty as to sign the death-warrant of a man who for five days in his cell would have to endure the pangs of such terrible torture. I wish you good day, Sir, and I shall not meet you here on Tuesday morning, of that I am positive.'

"And he was right. I was reprieved, as he had foreseen."

"That's the best ever!" declared Maltrat. And Sicougnot, although very jealous, could not deny it.

MONSIEUR U

Paul Morand

"Beg pardon, Sir, is this No. 489 Fifth Avenue?"

"Yes, can't you read?"

"No."

At three in the morning, Mr. Doolittle was coming out of Texas Guinan's, mindless of the low ceilings, the colored lamps, his mixed cup of raspberry juice, dynamite and Eau de Cologne. He had taken Fifth Avenue to look up at the sky comfortably and pluck his favorite constellations as he passed them walking in zig-zag, when suddenly he met the strange being. It was a long, lank figure of a Chinese, dusty and covered with spider-webs, barely protected by two old door-mats made in the shape of a priest's chasuble, and holding a white cock on a leash. Mr. Doolittle took him for some shady purveyor of opium-dens and was about to drive him away when the man said abruptly:

"I have come to ask for a favor, Sir, a favor that will cost you nothing. My name is Mr. U.; I don't belong to New York nor to the year 1926; I hail from Kansou and the IXth century."

Mr. Doolittle was so drunk that he saw nothing unusual in meeting on Fifth Avenue a man a thousand years older than himself: "Are you a ghost?" he asked.

"I am," said the Chinese, "and a ghost in need."

"I am Irish as you may see," said Doolittle, "and I love ghosts; what can I do for you?"

"Just this," said the specter; "you know that in the time of the Tangs—I lived under that dynasty and died in 837—it was thought beseeming to bury with the corpse a number of earthenware figures who, once underground, revived and took up their service by the dead. According to that custom my tomb contained servants, wry-faced warriors, dromedaries adorned by streaks of green enamel, wild boars and red earthenware horses, a magnificent cavalry, the image of all I had left behind in this world, where I was an Academician and the honorary Viceroy of Kansou. These figures obeying Rite, watched over my sleep and my meals. As ill-luck will have it, they were particularly fine. A Chinese proverb says: 'A plain woman is a treasure in a family.' It might apply to funereal statuettes, too, as mine, being beautiful, became coveted.

"Two months ago, about the eighth moon, a merchant of New York, on his hunt for antiques in the land of Kansou, took advantage of the nameless confusion in which this unfortunate province had sunk, to get my tomb opened. His attention had been drawn by the splendor of the mausoleum, and the number of allegorical inscriptions. I had designed it myself in my lifetime. Eighteen astrologers had been consulted by me on the choice and direction of the spot, which had been selected in a hundred by dint of the mirror and magic compass. Not a star above, not a dragon below could trouble my rest. . . . One morning I heard knocks; sudden light blinded me, and I perceived leaning over me a little black monkey in a gray tail-coat and white gaiters, with a rose

in his button-hole. His hair was frizzy like the wool of a newborn lamb. Behind him stood a four-wheeled car without horses filled with money-bags.

"He who had thus dared to unite the World of Light to the World of Darkness ordered his 'comprador' to proffer an indemnity to the local governor and took away every one of the statuettes which embellished and defended my tomb. Like the fox of our legends who steals into houses and carries away all that tempts him, this creature after violating my sepulcher, forthwith crossed the seas on a fire-junk, laden with his spoil. Since then, Sir, I have known no rest; the surrounding dead, knowing that I am defenseless, steal my food, my castor-oil, my ginger, my perfumes and candles, the pious and persistent homage of my descendants. I must now go out for meals; I have become part of the crowd of 'mendicant spirits' of which every honorable Chinese stands in horror: I feed on chicken tripe picked up in the mud of the streets, on dead cats or on my own lice. At times I even prowl round houses where pigs are slaughtered and I, a viceroy, lie flat on my stomach and lick the blood trickling in the dust. Not to mention the mixed company I have to associate with now, if I want to live: sailors lost at sea, peasants struck by lightning, coolies dead in foreign land, or worst still and more ignoble, soldiers killed on battlefields. And see now: I am reduced to a shadow; never more shall my soul have enough strength to reincarnate itself. It is a tragedy! How can I now rise to a superior rank? I am a spirit deprived of all posthumous promotion."

The Chinese half-opened his mats: his empty stomach was diaphanous. Through it Mr. Doolittle saw a skeleton,

beyond the skeleton the astral body and in this the lighted windows of the Plaza Hotel.

"After long searching," Mr. U. went on, "I discovered that my robber's name was Willy Judesheim and that he lived in New York. The pursuit was tremendously difficult, for in daytime I was confined to my tomb, and could set out only at night. Now the worst is over, I have found his house but I don't yet know where to lodge my complaint.

"In China, a drum hangs in front of a mandarin's door; when a plaintiff strikes it, the mandarin is bound to give him a hearing on the spot and to render a judgment. I see nothing of the kind in America: where is your justice?"

"I have no idea," said Mr. Doolittle. "Have I not told you I am Irish. Politics are my job and I am above justice."

"And mind you, sir, I have not even the possibility to revenge myself on Mr. Judesheim in the traditional way, by committing suicide before his door, for I am dead already, else I should choose to die in the manner that would be most offensive to him and hardest to bear: viz. by the rope. To make him publicly responsible for my death, I should slip in my boot a written accusation against him; I should even—to give it a still finer point and make him lose face completely, inscribe the precise motive of my decease on my very skin. But there is no battling against the Impossible. I have no choice but to take justice in my own hands. Therefore, as I already asked you, is this number 489?"

With his skinny finger, Mr. U. pointed to a large Renaissance palace of bricks and stone, in Tudor style,

where nothing hinted at commerce, except two trimmed yew-trees and a ravishing black marble plate as unobtrusive as a visiting card, bearing the words:

WILLY JUDESHEIM
Expert and Dealer in Early Chinese Art

"Here we are," said the specter, when Mr. Doolittle had finished deciphering the inscription. "Now let us act quickly. I feel lost in this far-off country of yours where houses have more than one floor and women large flat feet, where one never meets a single yellow lama nor a single camel. This is what I expect you to do, Man Alive; you must cry out in Chinese the following words:

"'Yu-tche Li-k'o Chang Kan-sou K'iv K'Inn-tse'

Their meaning is: 'By imperial order let this rabble return to Kansou immediately.' On hearing the words, 'Imperial Order,' my servants and my life-guard who belong to a time when inferiors still respected their masters, will obey forthwith and with my kitchens, stables and women will fly back to my tomb. However, it is imperious that you should speak and not myself; you are, doubtless, unaware of the extension of earthly authority to the beings of the Nether World; where a ghost has only the ghost of his strength, a living man keeps all his prestige, especially if he commands by Imperial Order."

Mr. Doolittle objected that he really could not penetrate in Mr. Judesheim's house whose doors were guarded by detectives and exploding engines.

"Just draw nearer to the house," said the ghost; "my servants are on the other side of the wall. I can see them

all gathered in the marble hall on the ground floor. Wanting a sword which always scares spirits you have at least an umbrella; brandish it according to the rules of incantation in the direction of the four cardinal points; then breathe hard, swallow your breath in the manner of astrologers and shout with all your might!"

"*Yu-tche Li-k'o Chang Kan-sou K'iv K'Inn-tse,*" Mr. Doolittle yelled twice with the utmost delight.

An appalling crash followed. The night porter issued from the Plaza; policemen came running on motorcycles followed by newspaper boys and prostitutes; then, a deathly silence. . . .

"Thank you, Sir," said the man dressed in mats. "Now as you see the helpmate of ghosts, the white cock I am leading, begins to show uneasiness; his first cry is near. I must reinstate myself in my body and in my profaned tomb; for you, living man, it is 25 days from hence; as for me, in barely five seconds I shall reach it by a short cut through Hell. I beg you will accept as a token of my gratitude this small gift." And Mr. U. laid in Doolittle's hands a heavy silver bag containing, he said, one thousand "ligatures." Then he lowered his rotten mat on his shoulders, pulled the leash of his cock, made for Central Park and disappeared.

Mr. Doolittle went to his hotel; having missed his way several times he at last found his room, in his room his door, and in his door his keyhole. He put the silver bag under his bed and fell asleep.

The next morning he awoke all dressed. The New York *Times* was brought in. It related in big letters the nightly burglary in the house of Mr. Willy Judesheim the eminent expert. A unique collection of Chinese works of art of every period which the Metropolitan Museum

had lately offered to purchase for a million dollars, lay shattered on the floor; the rarest pieces, several funereal statuettes recently brought from China had disappeared.

Then only, Mr. Doolittle remembered the silver bag he had deposited under his bed; he put out his hand, made an effort to lift it and, to his surprise realized that it weighed no more than his newspaper. On opening it, he found it full of bits of gold paper which he mistook for confetti brought by error from Texas Guinan.

They were sham paper money dealt out in China at funerals.

LOVE IN HASTE

Andre Obey

Once upon a time there lived a man and a woman, the man was twenty-eight, the woman forty or so. They both knew all there is to know about the world, and the disparity between their ages did not dismay them. They enjoyed one another's company and looked forward to their more or less accidental meetings at concerts and in society.

The man knew many delightful girls who would have given up all for the honor of bearing his name, while the woman knew more than one man of rank who aspired above all to bestow his name upon her. But the man had had experience in the ways of girls, and he had had cause to complain of them; and the woman had finished with men of rank ever since her marriage with a man, who was twenty years her senior. Her husband was the victim of an incurable disease, and being of a logical turn of mind, he had died, rather than nurse his disease.

Love is not always blind. This man and woman realized that they were laying up for themselves misery, disappointment and remorse. They resolved that it would be more prudent not to meet again, whereupon they proceeded to arrange their next meeting.

It was a sultry day at the end of July, when the man made his way slowly to the woman's house. The streets were deserted, so he began to talk to himself aloud:

"The Bordeaux express leaves at 9:58 to-night. It's an opportunity. I'll have time to spend an hour, or say two hours, with her. Then home to pack, dinner, and I shall have gone without having time to reflect. Things aren't turning out too badly."

He paused for a minute by the railings of a park to mop his brow, and he watched a gardener watering his lawns under the shadow of plane-trees.

The 9:58 to-night . . . Bordeaux to-morrow, a week with Nestier, to see how he and his young wife are getting on. Then Bordeaux, Geneva, Switzerland, good hotels, flirts; then—but that will surely be enough for me.

When he reached the woman's house he realized that, maybe, all this would not satisfy him. Leaning against the wall of her garden he planned a longer journey, for Europe seemed too limited, too cramped. He rang the bell, still repeating mechanically, "I'm off to-night—to—to—tour the world."

To Augustine who opened the door, he said:

"I'm going away to-night."

"Madame will be very sorry," said Augustine.

The man went through to the room where the woman was waiting for him.

"Good afternoon," he said, between his teeth. "I've come to tell you that I am going away to-night. I'm going to tour the world and—and—if you like, I'll take you with me."

His legs were trembling, and he fell at the woman's feet, but he was conscious of a strange feeling of relief and of triumph. As there was no question of starting for two or three days, they went that evening to a concert, where they met many friends, but they did not trouble to tell

them of their great adventure, nor did they strive to hide it from them, for they were indifferent to the opinion and attitude of the world. They guessed that their friends considered them fools, cynics and ill-starred creatures, and they received these epithets with a smile, as they would wedding presents.

It was late in the season for a concert and several times the rattle of the ventilator drowned the music of the flute, playing "The Afternoon of a Fawn." The conductor of the orchestra was in evening dress, but he disappeared at the interval, and came back in a dinner jacket. He fidgeted with his collar the whole time he led "The Dance of Prince Igor."

On the way home from the concert the man and the woman came to the conclusion that all music, whether it be of Debussy, of Borodine, of Berlioz or even Beethoven expresses some form or aspect of love. However, has love not ever been the theme of all musicians? They went up towards Montmartre, humming snatches of Wagner, of Franck and Ravel, and they told one another that love was the soul of music. There was a fair at Montmartre. The man and the woman were astonished to discover that even the wail of a street organ tells of love. It was then that they lived through their moment of ecstasy, when all mankind seemed to be at their feet, scattering flowers in their path. It was certainly the most wonderful evening of their love, but at the time, they expected others like it, and even more wonderful.

They set off on their journey. As the train traveled north, the woman believed that the very smoke from the factories rejoiced in her joy, and that the pleasant country was smiling because she was glad.

"I am happy," she said, "happier than I've been for . . ."

She was going to say twenty-five years, but she realized in time that it was more than the man's age, so she whispered "for such a long time."

"As long as that?" said the man, in an absent-minded way.

She thought "He wants to know my age. Disaster. Let's change the conversation." She tried to think of something to say, and finally.

"I'll wager that you—you'd like to—to know my age."

No, he did not want to know it. He roused himself and said:

"Do please understand. I love you. That's the one thing that matters."

He generally solved the problems of life according to the arithmetical formula that two and two make four.

They decided to hide their happiness away in a little fishing village, between two cliffs on the Channel Coast. One of those places where you always smell brine and fish. They would have been wiser if they had set off to tour the world, for they would not have walked it. The man could not live without exercise and the freedom of open spaces, and he had a foolish enough habit of talking to the sun, the wind, the clouds, and various other elements which invariably mocked him. The merciless sea does not spare a pretty, highly-strung woman, and rough winds are fatal to face cream and powder. The woman ceased to make up, and as long walks not only tired her, but also made her hair untidy, she adopted a simple style of hair-dressing, which was not always too becoming. Although she had the complexion of a townswoman, she

loved the open air with all her soul. The loss to the one was the gain to the other.

The man and the woman lived the open air life, walking, climbing and exploring to his heart's content. When men are happy, they want to give event to their energies, just as in moments of suspense and anxiety, they pace restlessly about. When the woman was scrambling up a nasty stony little slope, one day, she twisted her ankle. While the man was lost in admiration of rose and gray shades of the twilight, the woman resolved that she would wear low-heeled shoes in future.

He wanted her to climb the sound hills, but she refused.

"You're just a little tired, aren't you?" he said, holding her in his arms.

"No, no," she whispered, "only happy, thrilled."

He could feel the woman's heart beating hard and fast against his breast. He opened his eyes, for he generally closed them when he was kissing her, and he saw the fiery ball of the sun looking at him reproachfully from the horizon. When a man looks at anything over a woman's head the kisses he gives are but paltry things. And the woman generally notices this.

"It will soon be winter," he said, as he watched a mist rising from the sea.

"Yes," she whispered in a low voice.

The next day, he told her that he would like to take her in the evening to the casino of the nearest town, for he was afraid she was finding it dull to be alone with him. They went to the casino, he in a dinner jacket and she in evening dress. As soon as they reached the gold and white room where the orchestra was playing, the man scrutinized the woman. She was standing erect under a

brilliant chandelier. He ought to have remembered that sun and wind coarsen the skin, and that artificial light sheds a harsh glare on to the face.

Unfortunately the orchestra was playing "The Dances of Prince Igor." He looked at the woman several times and frowned, as he thought of the last three weeks, and the way they had spent them. The woman was thinking that electric light, time and music are three very cruel inventions.

The next morning, the man received a wire calling him back to Paris, as his sister had been taken ill. While he was packing his case, he said that he would probably go to Vichy with his sister, and perhaps spend the rest of his holiday with her. The woman thought as she passed him his ties that he had not troubled to inquire further as to whether his sister was really ill and in need of him. The woman was glad he had been spared the necessity of lying. On her way back from the station, she paused a moment facing the sea and said simply:

"I have given him my youth."

It was true. But the sea mocked her.

She rocked herself so that she might fall asleep.

SCHEHERAZADE THE WIDOW

Henri de Regnier

Scheherazade had slept badly that night. The sun had been scorching during the daytime, and the air was so sultry that one could scarcely breathe; even the finest muslin seemed unbearably heavy. Scheherazade had in vain taken off as many of her light clothes as she could, and relieved herself of the restraint of wearing bracelets and necklaces. It was in vain that she let her precious rings fall, one by one, on the tray beside her. She did not even keep the magic ring that the Sultan Sirdar had put on her finger, on the last of the Thousand and One nights, as a guarantee of safety, nor the sacred talisman that secured her inviolability, and preserved her forever from all dangers. Scheherazade had gone to the most tranquil bower in the gardens, where the air was least stifling. It was made of crystal and over it there hovered three feathery sprays of clear water that were like a limpid crown. There she passed the long hours of the sultry day, but nothing relieved her weariness and lassitude. Her favorite doves scarcely brought a smile to her lips as they skimmed past her tired eyes. Scheherazade was so exhausted by the heat that she had not had the energy to think about the tale of wonder that she was to tell before the Sultan in the evening, when after sunset he would seek to enjoy the pleasures of the night on the highest terrace of the palace.

The heat at night had been almost as insufferable as

during the day, and Scheherazade had no pleasant memories to recall before she went to sleep, for she had not liked the indifferent way in which the Sultan had listened to the daily tale. Scarcely had she begun it before the Sultan's attention flagged, and it was clear that he was preoccupied with his own thoughts, and also that these thoughts foreshadowed no happiness for His Majesty. So much could Scheherazade conjecture from the Sultan's frown, and from the way he passed his hand through his beard, which was just beginning to be streaked with silver. More than once, he had gone to the length of fidgeting with the ruby pummel of his sword or with the agate hilt of his dagger, and in spite of ingenious developments in Scheherazade's story of a genie in a bottle, the Sultan's severe expression did not change. He neglected, not only to thank her, for her story as he usually did, but also to have the bowl of snow brought, for it was the custom to provide this to refresh the one who had been telling a tale.

Was not such an omission an irrefutable proof that the Sultan's thoughts were occupied with other matters?

The Sultan's attitude had struck Scheherazade, and her vanity was hurt by it, for she was proud of her skill as a teller of tales, and her fame had spread beyond the limits of the kingdom to the ends of the earth. Everywhere the name of Scheherazade was well-known and the story of her life was told time and time again. Women especially professed an enthusiastic admiration for her, for was she not the glory and the pride of her sex? It was she who had succeeded in restraining the cruel whims of Shariar, and it was her own delightful ruse that had saved her from the fatal snare, which had been laid for

her. What more splendid example of feminine superiority could be cited? She was not unconscious of her fame, and yet Shariar had wounded her susceptibility that evening. He had been found wanting. He was ungrateful, in spite of all she had done for him. Those who are fortunate enough to have the privilege of listening to the tales told by a Scheherazade ought to give their whole attention, so as to miss not a word. What did he mean by his taciturn looks, his sulking and frowning? His absent-minded air did not please Scheherazade, who, like all authors, was irritable and easily offended. She had been extremely annoyed by Shariar's behavior, but the final insult was that the Sultan had asked her no questions, about the characters or incidents of the story, as he invariably did.

There was no doubt about it, the Sultan had been a reluctant listener, and when the story was ended, he took no more notice of Scheherazade, but hid himself in a mist of smoke from his long pipe, while he listened to the ripple of the waters from the gardens, and watched the mischievous smiles that flitted about his taciturn face, under the turban.

The Sultan's silence lasted until the Great Vizier Kerendar appeared on the terrace. Kerendar was a man whom Scheherazade did not like. He had opposed, more than once, the whims of Scheherazade, and he had great influence with the Sultan. He explained his reproaches and his hostility on the grounds of State reasons. The great and glorious wars waged by the Sultan Shariar had cost many men and much money; the treasury was empty; the population decimated, and all this did not tend to increase the Sultan's popularity. He was accused of shedding his subjects' blood and of spending their money ex-

travagantly in order to gratify his desires. Kerendar knew of these complaints, for he maintained an efficient and powerful service of spies, so that he was informed of all that went on in the kingdom as well as in the city and in the palace. The doings of Scheherazade did not escape Kerendar, and this espionage made the Sultan jealous, and disgusted Scheherazade, who did not however intend to be disloyal to the Sultan. Still she would have been better pleased if she had lived in an atmosphere of willing homage and flattery, and Kerendar's vigilance was enough to drive away the boldest. None dared to look at her in the presence of Kerendar; yet to look at a beautiful face is an innocent delight, and Scheherazade would have liked to show sometimes that she could fascinate by her beauty too . . . The Sultan's taciturn face was too somber for her.

The more Kerendar talked in confidential tones to Shariar, the more taciturn and grave the Sultan became. He tightened his clasp on the great ruby of his sword. Indeed, Kerendar's reports were not pleasant, for disturbing rumors were abroad in every part of the kingdom. The tax-collectors were being met by hostility everywhere, and in some places, they were actually outraged. Elsewhere, farmers concealed their harvests and merchants their profits, for they expected to grow rich if there was a famine, as many said there would be. Many of the inhabitants were leaving the country, and whole regions were deserted. The discontent was generally felt against a Sultan who spent his evenings in listening to tales instead of striving to help his people. Scheherazade, like all women, was shrewd, and she understood all that Kerendar said or implied. There was a conspiracy on foot

against the Sultan. The plan was to invade the palace, to break into the gardens, and to put the Sultan to death at the point of the sword. This conspiracy concerned several men bound by solemn oaths, but the leaders of it were fanatics. Bagdad was infested by plotters who would have been really dangerous if Kerendar's spies had not been so efficient, for they traced every attempted conspiracy. The Grand Vizier prided himself on his success, but the constant vigilance was expensive, and all resources of the State were needed for the purpose. If Kerendar were given the means to do it, he would answer for all.

While he was listening to these reports, Shariar had not ceased pulling at his beard, and he left the terrace, walking away with Kerendar, without looking at Scheherazade, who went to her apartment.

When she was in her own room, and sure that the Sultan would not come to look for her, Scheherazade sent her women away and lay down on the scented leather cushions. The night air was a little less sultry, and it was easier to breathe. The fragrance of roses came in through the windows, and the room was lit by the silver beams of a late moon. The silence was broken only by the voices of sentinels who, with bare yatagan, guarded the gates of the gardens. The idea suddenly struck Scheherazade that she would like to go down. She enjoyed roaming at night sometimes in the gardens, where she watched the tranquil dove-cotes, with the birds sleeping with their heads under their wings, so that they looked as though they had been beheaded. She had not gone to the trouble of putting on her sandals again, and she was satisfied by thinking of the chattering magpie which had amused her so much

when she was a child. This magpie was the joy of the poor cobbler, her father. How the magpie used to chatter while the good man worked at his leather, and stitched it! Scheherazade often thought of her father's stall, where she had grown up, in the days when she wore only the rags which even then she liked to arrange becomingly, while she sucked a slice of melon. There she heard all manner of men talk, for the shop was quite a favored meeting place, where the news of the town was exchanged. Her father's tongue was as keen and cutting as his awl, and he did not scorn to amuse his clients by telling them stories. It was from listening to her father that she acquired the taste for telling those tales which had played such an important part in her life. Her inventions had pleased this audience, for it was not in truth hard to please, and in this way she had attracted the attention of Ibrahim, the old carpet-seller. Scheherazade had learned the meaning of love from Ibrahim, and from one or two others for whom she had not the slightest feeling. The men were neither young nor handsome, but they were maybe in a position to offer the jewels and the clothes she longed for, as well as the money which would help her poverty-stricken family. In these hard times, Scheherazade conforted herself by imagining wonderful adventures, in which she played the principal part. Things went on in this way until she heard of the strange trial open to all those women who would strive to distract the Sultan Shariar, by telling him stories when he could not sleep. She knew that the risks were great, but a secret desire drove her on to try her fortune. One fine day, she had her name put on the fatal list in the palace, and before long her turn came. She saw again the high terrace, and

the Sultan listening attentively to the cleverly-woven tales with their unexpected episodes, and she reflected on her extraordinary fortune. She had not only escaped the headsman's ax, but she had fascinated Shariar; she had felt the Sultan's black beard touch her face, and his heavily-ringed fingers caress her body. The little girl who told tales as they were told in the cobbler's shop, had become the favorite of the Sultan Shariar. All Bagdad envied her power, and the story of her life was told time after time, for it was one of the best stories. . . .

While she recalled her wonderful past, Scheherazade felt her eyes heavy with sleep, and although the first light of dawn was filtering through, she knew that she could sleep on idly for hours, as though she were the poor cobbler's daughter, while the poor Sultan would soon have to wake up to attend to affairs of state.

But there was no sleep for Scheherazade that night. She had scarcely closed her eyes when she heard unusual sounds; the palace seemed full of strange noises. There were footsteps in the gardens and on the staircases, and before long cries rang out. Everywhere there was disturbance. What was happening? Were the people of Bagdad in revolt? Was there a fire or an earthquake? Were enemies attacking the city or was she in the midst of a nightmare? Was she continuing one of her tales in her sleep? No! This man standing beside her with his arms raised, his turban loose, he was no phantom! Scheherazade recognized his sallow complexion, long, slanting eyes and long nose; it was the Grand Vizier Kerendar standing there wild-eyed, open-mouthed, his hands blood-stained and a trail of blood behind him!

. . . . . .

The Sultan Shariar had been found murdered in his bed. His own dagger with the hilt of agate had been thrust into his breast, and his throat had been cut with his own ruby-pummeled sword. His guards were lying by the door, with their tongues hanging out; they were strangled. The murderer had vanished, leaving no traces, but the Sultan's death was the manifestation of the discontent that had been rife in Bagdad. When Kerendar went into his master's room that morning, and saw the ghastly sight, he tried to bring the Sultan back to life, but his efforts were in vain. All he could do was to publish the news of the Sultan's death. He went to inform Scheherazade because her beauty and her genius had made her popular in Bagdad, and Kerendar suggested that she should be declared regent. Nothing was easier, and Kerendar undertook all arrangements provided that he should remain Grand Vizier, with authority to govern in the Regent's name. If this was not done, the power would pass into the hands of the atabeck of Moussoul, and Scheherazade would certainly spend the rest of her life imprisoned in a stronghold, if she did not meet a more violent and speedy fate. Scheherazade was not ambitious, but she loved her ease, and the thought of leaving her palace, her gardens, her bowers, her fountains and her dovecotes was not pleasant. And what could be a more glorious climax to the adventures of her life, but the possession of royal authority? Shariar's death did not grieve her, and the prospect of wielding his authority pleased her very much. Henceforward, she could live as she pleased, being her own mistress, and not obliged to distract a master who exacted so much, although he was generous. She could sleep the

whole night without having to sit up late, because her master could not sleep; she could come and go as she pleased, without having to tell more stories. What a relief it would be not to have to invent any more stories, especially as her powers were becoming exhausted! All these considerations induced her to accept Kerendar's proposition. He did everything for the best and he was remarkably astute. The funeral of Shariar was soon followed by the crowning of Scheherazade, but it was not long before the Grand Vizier was hanging on the gallows, for every one judged him to be the murderer of the Sultan Shariar, although no positive proof could be brought forward. But some one was guilty and Scheherazade had taken a dislike to Kerendar since he had terrified her by waking her suddenly, and standing beside her with blood stained hands.

For the first part of Scheherazade's reign all went well, that is to say, the people of Bagdad went on suffering the same wrongs, paying the same taxes, and receiving the same unjust treatment as before, but they adored Scheherazade whereas they had hated Shariar.

It is always thus with the crowd: their lot is always pitiable, and their happiness merely imaginary. They thought that Scheherazade was beginning a reign of bliss, and they told her this so often that she began to wonder why she was not as happy as her subjects were, and the disproportion annoyed her. Now that Scheherazade was her own mistress, now that she could wear all the jewels of Shariar's treasure, now that she was greeted with shouts of joy every time she showed herself to the people, now that she had rebuilt her palace, had had the gardens rearranged, changed the places of bowers and groves,

she realized that she was not happier than she had been during the Sultan's lifetime. In the evenings when she went up to the terrace of her new palace, she knew there was something lacking. She felt idle and undecided, and as she was in the habit of reasoning, she came to the conclusion that the tales she had told every night had stimulated her mind to activity. She had been obliged to seek for a subject and create circumstances and now that the game was over, she had fallen into a kind of mental torpor, which was simply a form of boredom. But how could she remedy this state? She could not assemble enough of her followers and dependents to form an audience, and she would have scorned their flattery and praise. There remained the last resort of writing stories, but Scheherazade knew that stories lose a great deal when they are written. Her tales would lack the sound of her voice, the grace of her gestures, and the mysterious smile of her eyes. She might even lose her reputation as a teller of tales. These reflections did not tend to relieve her boredom. Days seemed endless, and yet she dreaded the approach of night. To amuse herself, Scheherazade had recourse to pleasures which were no less intense for being silent, but she knew that the satisfaction of sensual delights was just as limited for the Regent as for the cobbler's daughter. Those who are honored, flattered and respected are feared, for it is difficult to be loved.

Scheherazade often reflected thus in her crystal bower, the only one she had kept from the old gardens. The ripple of the waters soothed her thoughts, and she could have thought that their sweet voice told her some strange story, but alas! the voice of waters is not the human voice. Suddenly Scheherazade gave a start for an idea had come

into her head: would it not be amusing for her to hear some stories told? Why not try? Certainly, she would not have the story-tellers executed, when they bored her, as Shariar had done! She would be content to have their ears cut off, as a punishment for not charming hers: Scheherazade was not cruel, for she even repented having put poor Kerandar to death. Now she was wiser, but it is dull to be wise sometimes . . . She would have the news published in Bagdad that she wanted story-tellers.

The project was successful, for the marvelous story of Scheherazade, the cobbler's daughter, who had become the Sultan's favorite, had made the telling of stories a popular pastime, and there were many who thought they could tell stories, so that there was scarcely a house in Bagdad where tales were not told. Throughout the watches of the night, tales of mystery and marvels were spun. Academies and societies were formed where these stories were told and heard: there were competitions organized, and prizes were given, with the result that rivalry became hot, and hatred and jealousy were stirred up. One society became bitterly jealous of another, and a literary fury raged in Bagdad. It is easy to imagine the result of the Regent's offer: competitors rushed to try their fortune in the trial, for they were not dismayed by the penalty, as each one was vain enough to believe himself safe from the risks of such an outrage. Was their ability not sufficient to assure them a happy issue? The most modest of them did not doubt that Scheherazade would hasten to reward him, when she heard his story. The order in which they were to tell their tales was drawn for by lot.

The first was Mardouk, who was an ugly and pompous

little man, with an unlimited opinion of himself, so he did not doubt that Scheherazade would take to him as soon as she saw him. He was full of self-assurance when he arrived at the palace. Although his rivals despised Mardouk, and considered him poor enough as a teller of tales, they were more than a little anxious about his fate. Women's taste is so bad that no one can count on their whims, nor anticipate their caprices. But Mardouk had no doubts about his success. That was clear from the way he went up the steps to the terrace where Scheherazade was waiting. Mardouk had dressed up for the event: he had had a garment made by the best tailor in Bagdad, and he wore a turban with a feather mount. His hair had been cut, his beard trimmed, and he was puffed up with self-conceit. It was true that his companions had insisted on accompanying him to the palace gate, and a great crowd had followed them. When Mardouk went into the palace, the crowd still waited, talking in animated groups, and discussing the ability of Mardouk. Although it was late at night, the discussions went on, until the great bronze door of the palace opened, and Mardouk appeared. His garments were in disorder, his turban loose, and he carried carefully in a piece of linen his two ears.

Mardouk's example did not discourage his rivals. Every week, the one to whom the lot fell went up to the terrace of Scheherazade's palace. She listened attentively to each story, but she had to admit that none of them pleased her. The wonderful adventures that had given her such pleasure seemed dull when she heard them from another. How dreary those tales were, with their magic lamps, their enchanted jars, their journeys,

and all that delights the petty mind of man! How vain and futile it all was! Scheherazade grew so weary that she did not even exact the penalty that was her due when she was bored. Could none of them relieve her boredom? She was so tired of it that she used to send the story-tellers away before they had even disentangled the meshes of their complicated plots, and their vanity was so great that they attributed their treatment to causes which did not hurt their self-esteem.

Venomous tongues spread evil rumors in Bagdad, and it was whispered that the Regent was no longer in a state to appreciate the best stories. Songs and epigrams about her were rife, and she was slandered on all sides.

To distract herself, Scheherazade used to roam about the gardens, but they seemed empty to her. She was weary of solitude, and the sound of her footsteps made her shudder. In vain the fountains played, in vain the flowers spread their fragrance, in vain the birds sang, for Scheherazade remained sad and deserted. She felt the futility of the respect with which she was treated although it proved the extent of her power.

She almost regretted the kisses of Shariar, his firm clasp, and his rough voice. Sometimes Scheherazade thought of traveling, and visiting various parts of the kingdom. She would gaze at the horizon from her terrace and look at the river passing through the town, reflecting mosques and minarets. Beyond, there was a vast plain stretching to the mountains in the distance. She could see eagles soaring to the sky, and herds in the green pastures that were watered by brooks. Sometimes she would see a caravan on the way to Bagdad, and she would wonder whether it would bring her some unexpected news,

some rare treasure, some wonderful personality. And she thought regretfully of the bygone days when she, the cobbler's daughter, had eaten the skins of water-melons, while her bare skin was covered only by verminous rags.

It was on one of her sad days that Scheherazade heard of the arrival of a great caravan. From far away in the land of the Paramides, across the desert of Bogdiane, it had made its way to Bagdad, through danger and weariness, in order to offer to Scheherazade gifts from the King of the country. The men who came with it were not like the men of Bagdad, either in dress or face. There was one of them who was famous as a teller of tales: he was a tall man and his face was veiled, like a woman's. He was said to be of a princely family, and he sought the favor of telling a story to the Regent. Scheherazade shrugged her shoulders when she heard of this request. What was the use of another experiment? What did this presumptuous stranger want of her? She certainly would not spare him. To punish his audacity, she would not only cut off his ears, but have him executed. Let him come the next day, and so much the worse for him!

It was a warm and starry night, similar to the one when Shariar had been assassinated. The stars shone and the moon was up. Scheherazade lay on the scented cushions and listened to the murmur of the waters, while she breathed the fragrance of roses. She longed to bathe her feverish body in icy water to cool her burning anxiety. As soon as she had finished with the stranger, she would dive into her swimming bath under the earth; its waters came from such a deep spring that they shone like glittering diamonds. But first she must see the story-teller. He came.

He was indeed tall, and he looked strong and noble, but his face was veiled, and he was wrapped in a capacious robe. Instead of prostrating himself at the Sultane's feet, he stood before her. She looked at him with curiosity. What words would fall from those mysterious lips? Scheherazade was conscious of a sudden interest in him. All at once, the cushions seemed deliciously cool, the stars shone more brilliantly and the moonbeams were silvery. There was a strange fragrance in the air, the scent of the roses was more delightful and the voice of the fountains sweeter. Suddenly a nightingale began to sing in the darkness of the wonderful night. The stranger stood silent and veiled. Scheherazade too was silent, she lowered her eyelids, her heart was beating fast.

When she looked up, the man had taken off his veil, and he was looking at her.

He was handsome, fine as the elements are fine, but he did not speak. Yet Scheherazade heard the most wonderful story of all from those lips that did not speak, for she learned from them what love can tell in silence of the beauty of death and of life.

THE COURAGEOUS HUNCHBACK WOMAN

Honore De Balzac

"Shall we go to the barn?" said the doctor laying a hand on Genestas's arm. They had taken leave of the curé and the other guests. "You will hear them talking about Napoleon, Captain Bluteau. Goguelat, the postman, is there, and there are several of his cronies who are sure to draw him out on the subject of the idol of the people. Nicolle, my stableman, has set a ladder so that we can climb up on the hay; there is a place from which we can look down on the whole scene. Come along, an upsitting is something worth seeing, believe me. It will not be the first time that I have hidden in the hay to overhear a soldier's tales or the stories that peasants tell among themselves. We must be careful to keep out of sight though, as these good folk turn shy and put on company manners as soon as they see a stranger."

"Eh! my dear sir," said Genestas, "have I not often pretended to be asleep so as to hear my troopers talking out on bivouac? My word, I once heard a droll yarn reeled off by an old quartermaster for some conscripts who were afraid of war; I never laughed so heartily in any theatre in Paris. He was telling them about the Retreat from Moscow, he told them that the army had nothing but the clothes they stood up in, that their wine was iced, that the dead stood stock-still

in the road just where they were, that they had seen White Russia, and that they curry-combed the horses there with their teeth, that those who were fond of skating had fine times of it, and people who had a fancy for savory ices had as much as they could put away, that the women were generally poor company, but that the only thing they could really complain of was the want of hot water for shaving. In fact, he told them such a pack of absurdities, that even an old quartermaster who had lost his nose with a frostbite, so that they had dubbed him *Nezrestant,* was fain to laugh."

"Hush!" said Benassis, "here we are. I will go first; follow after me."

Both of them scaled the ladder and hid themselves in the hay, in a place from whence they could have a good view of the party below, who had not heard a sound overhead. Little groups of women were clustered about three or four candles. Some of them sewed, others were spinning, a good few of them were doing nothing, and sat with their heads strained forward, and their eyes fixed on an old peasant who was telling a story. The men were standing about for the most part, or lying at full length on the trusses of hay. Every group was absolutely silent. Their faces were barely visible by the flickering gleams of the candles by which the women were working, although each candle was surrounded by a glass globe filled with water, in order to concentrate the light. The thick darkness and shadow that filled the roof and all the upper part of the barn seemed still further to diminish the light that fell here and there upon the workers' heads with such

picturesque effects of light and shade. Here, it shone full upon the bright wondering eyes and brown forehead of a little peasant maiden; and there the straggling beams brought out the outlines of the rugged brows of some of the older men, throwing up their figures in sharp relief against the dark background, and giving a fantastic appearance to their worn and weather-stained garb. The attentive attitude of all these people and the expression on all their faces showed that they had given themselves up entirely to the pleasure of listening, and that the narrator's sway was absolute. It was a curious scene. The immense influence that poetry exerts over every mind was plainly to be seen. For is not the peasant who demands that the tale of wonder should be simple, and that the impossible should be well-nigh credible, a lover of poetry of the purest kind?

"She did not like the look of the house at all," the peasant was saying as the two newcomers took their places where they could overhear him; "but the poor little hunchback was so tired out with carrying her bundle of hemp to market, that she went in; besides, the night had come, and she could go no further. She only asked to be allowed to sleep there, and ate nothing but a crust of bread that she took from her wallet. And inasmuch as the woman who kept house for the brigands knew nothing about what they had planned to do that night, she let the old woman into the house, and sent her upstairs without a light. Our hunchback throws herself down on a rickety truckle bed, says her prayers, thinks about her hemp, and is dropping off to sleep. But before she is fairly asleep, she hears a

noise, and in walk two men carrying a lantern, and each man had a knife in his hand. Then fear came upon her; for in those times, look you, they used to make *pâtés* of human flesh for the seigneurs, who were very fond of them. But the old woman plucked up heart again, for she was so thoroughly shriveled and wrinkled that she thought they would think her a poorish sort of diet. The two men went past the hunchback and walked up to a bed that there was in the great room, and in which they had put the gentleman with the big portmanteau, the one that passed for a *negromancer*. The taller man holds up the lantern and takes the gentleman by the feet, and the short one, that had pretended to be drunk, clutches hold of his head and cuts his throat, clean, with one stroke, swish! Then they leave the head and body lying in its own blood up there, steal the portmanteau, and go downstairs with it. Here is our woman in a nice fix! First of all she thinks of slipping out, before anyone can suspect it, not knowing that Providence had brought her there to glorify God and to bring down punishment on the murderers. She was in a great fright, and when one is frightened one thinks of nothing else. But the woman of the house had asked the two brigands about the hunchback, and that had alarmed them. So back they come, creeping softly up the wooden staircase. The poor hunchback curls up in a ball with fright, and she hears them talking about her in whispers.

"'Kill her, I tell you.'

"'No need to kill her.'

"'Kill her!'

"'No!'

"Then they come in. The woman, who was no fool, shuts her eyes and pretends to be asleep. She sets to work to sleep like a child, with her hand on her heart, and takes to breathing like a cherub. The man opens the lantern and shines the light straight into the eyes of the sleeping old woman—she does not move an eyelash, she is in such a terror for her neck.

" 'She is sleeping like a log; you can see that quite well,' " so says the tall one.

" 'Old women are so cunning!' answers the short man. 'I will kill her. We shall feel easier in our minds. Besides, we will salt her down to feed the pigs.'

"The old woman hears all this talk, but does not stir.

" 'Oh! it is all right, she is asleep,' says the short ruffian, when he saw that the hunchback had not stirred.

"That is how the old woman saved her life. And she may be fairly called courageous; for it is a fact that there are not many girls here who could have breathed like cherubs while they heard that talk going on about the pigs. Well, the two brigands set to work to lift up the dead man; they wrap him around in the sheets and chuck him out into the little yard; and the old woman hears the pigs scampering up to eat him, and grunting, *Hon! hon!*

"So when morning comes," the narrator resumed after a pause, "the woman gets up and goes down, paying a couple of sous for her bed. She takes up her wallet, goes on just as if nothing had happened, asks for the news of the countryside, and gets away in peace.

She wants to run. Running is quite out of the question, her legs fail her for fright; and lucky it was for her that she could not run, for this reason. She had barely gone half a quarter of a league before she sees one of the brigands coming after her, just out of craftiness to make quite sure that she had seen nothing. She guesses this, and sits herself down on a bowlder.

" 'What is the matter, good woman?' asks the short one, for it was the shorter one and the wickeder of the two who was dogging her.

" 'Oh! master,' says she, 'my wallet is so heavy, and I am so tired, that I badly want some good man to give me his arm' (sly thing, only listen to her!) 'if I am to get back to my poor home.'

"Thereupon the brigand offers to go along with her, and she accepts his offer. The fellow takes hold of her arm to see if she is afraid. Not she! She does not tremble a bit, and walks quietly along. So there they are, chatting away as nicely as possible, all about farming, and the way to grow hemp, till they come to the outskirts of the town, where the hunchback lived, and the brigand made off for fear of meeting some of the sheriff's people. The woman reached her house at midday, and waited there till her husband came home; she thought and thought over all that had happened on her journey and during the night. The hemp-grower came home in the evening. He was hungry; something must be got ready for him to eat. So while she greases her frying-pan, and gets ready to fry something for him, she tells him how she sold her hemp, and gabbles away as females do, but not a word does she say about

the pigs, nor about the gentleman who was murdered and robbed and eaten. She holds her frying-pan in the flames so as to clean it, draws it out again to give it a wipe, and finds it full of blood.

" 'What have you been putting into it?' says she to her man.

" 'Nothing,' says he.

"She thinks it must have been a nonsensical piece of woman's fancy, and puts her frying-pan into the fire again. . . . *Pouf!* A head comes tumbling down the chimney!

" 'Oh! look! It is nothing more nor less than the dead man's head,' says the old woman. 'How he stares at me! What does he want!'

" *'You must avenge me!'* says a voice.

" 'What an idiot you are!' said the hemp-grower. 'Always seeing something or other that has no sort of sense about it! Just you all over.'

"He takes up the head, which snaps at his finger, and pitches it out into the yard.

" 'Get on with my omelette,' he says, 'and do not bother yourself about that. 'Tis a cat.'

" 'A cat!' says she; 'it was as round as a ball.'

"She puts back her frying-pan on the fire. . . . *Pouf!* Down comes a leg this time, and they go through the whole story again. The man was no more astonished at the foot than he had been at the head; he snatched up the leg and threw it out at the door. Before they had finished, the other leg, both arms, the body, the whole murdered traveler, in fact, came down piecemeal. No omelette all this time! The old hemp-seller grew very angry indeed.

" 'By my salvation!' said he, 'when once my omelette is made we will see about satisfying that man yonder.'

" 'So you admit, now, that it was a man?' said the hunchback wife. 'What made you say it was not a head a minute ago, you great worry?'

"The woman breaks the eggs, fries the omelette, and dishes it up without any more grumbling; somehow this squabble began to make her feel very uncomfortable. Her husband sits down and begins to eat. The hunchback was frightened, and said that she was not hungry.

" 'Tap! tap!' There was a stranger rapping at the door.

" 'Who is there?'

" 'The man that died yesterday!'

" 'Come in,' answers the hemp-grower.

"So the traveler comes in, sits himself down on a three-legged stool, and says: 'Are you mindful of God, who gives eternal peace to those who confess His Name? Woman! You saw me done to death, and you have said nothing! I have been eaten by the pigs! The pigs do not enter Paradise, and therefore I, a Christian man, shall go down into hell, all because a woman forsooth will not speak, a thing that has never been known before. You must deliver me,' and so on, and so on.

"The woman, who was more and more frightened every minute, cleaned her frying-pan, put on her Sunday clothes, went to the justice, and told him about the crime, which was brought to light, and the robbers were broken on the wheel in proper style on the Mar-

ket Place. This good work accomplished, the woman and her husband always had the finest hemp you ever set eyes on. Then, which pleased them still better, they had something that they had wished for for a long time, to wit, a man child, who in course of time became a great lord of the king's.

"That is the true story of *The Courageous Hunchback Woman.*"

THE VENUS OF BRANIZA

Guy De Maupassant

Some years ago there lived in Braniza a celebrated Talmudist, renowned no less on account of his beautiful wife, than for his wisdom, his learning, and his fear of God. The Venus of Braniza deserved that name thoroughly; she deserved it for herself, on account of her singular beauty, and even more as the wife of a man deeply versed in the Talmud, for the wives of the Jewish philosophers are, as a rule, ugly or possess some bodily defect.

The Talmud explains this in the following manner: It is well known that marriages are made in heaven, and at the birth of a boy a divine voice calls out the name of his future wife, and *vice versâ*. But just as a good father tries to get rid of his good wares out of doors, and only uses the damaged stuff at home for his children, so God bestows on the Talmudists those women whom other men would not care to have.

Well, God made an exception in the case of our Talmudist, and had bestowed a Venus on him, perhaps only in order to confirm the rule by means of this exception, and to make it appear less hard. This philosopher's wife was a woman who would have done honor to any king's throne, or to a pedestal in any sculpture gallery. Tall, and with a wonderfully voluptuous figure, she carried a strikingly beautiful head,

surmounted by thick, black plaits, on her proud shoulders. Two large, dark eyes languished and glowed beneath long lashes, and her beautiful hands looked as if they were carved out of ivory.

This glorious woman, who seemed to have been designed by nature to rule, to see slaves at her feet, to provide occupation for the painter's brush, the sculptor's chisel, and the poet's pen, lived the life of a rare and beautiful flower shut up in a hothouse. She would sit the whole day long wrapped up in her costly furs looking down dreamily into the street.

She had no children; her husband, the philosopher, studied and prayed and studied again from early morning until late at night; his mistress was "the Veiled Beauty," as the Talmudists call the Kabbalah. She paid no attention to her house, for she was rich, and everything went of its own accord like a clock which has only to be wound up once a week; nobody came to see her, and she never went out of the house; she sat and dreamed and brooded and—yawned.

. . . . . .

One day when a terrible storm of thunder and lightning had spent its fury over the town, and all windows had been opened in order to let the Messias in, the Jewish Venus was sitting as usual in her comfortable easy-chair, shivering in spite of her furs, and thinking. Suddenly she fixed her glowing eyes on her husband who was sitting before the Talmud, swaying his body backward and forward, and said suddenly:

"Just tell me, when will Messias, the son of David, come?"

"He will come," the philosopher replied, "when all

the Jews have become either altogether virtuous or altogether vicious, says the Talmud."

"Do you believe that all the Jews will ever become virtuous?" the Venus continued.

"How am I to believe that?"

"So Messias will come when all the Jews have become vicious?"

The philosopher shrugged his shoulders, and lost himself again in the labyrinth of the Talmud, out of which, so it is said, only one man returned in perfect sanity. The beautiful woman at the window again looked dreamily out into the heavy rain, while her white fingers played unconsciously with the dark furs of her splendid robe.

. . . . . .

One day the Jewish philosopher had gone to a neighboring town, where an important question of ritual was to be decided. Thanks to his learning, the question was settled sooner than he had expected, and instead of returning the next morning, as he had intended, he came back the same evening with a friend who was no less learned than himself. He got out of the carriage at his friend's house and went home on foot. He was not a little surprised when he saw his windows brilliantly illuminated, and found an officer's servant comfortably smoking his pipe in front of his house.

"What are you doing here?" he asked in a friendly manner, but with some curiosity, nevertheless.

"I am on guard, lest the husband of the beautiful Jewess should come home unexpectedly."

"Indeed? Well, mind and keep a good lookout."

Saying this, the philosopher pretended to go away, but went into the house through the garden entrance at the back. When he got into the first room, he found a table laid for two, which had evidently only been left a short time previously. His wife was sitting as usual at her bedroom window wrapped in her furs, but her cheeks were suspiciously red, and her dark eyes had not their usual languishing look, but now rested on her husband with a gaze which expressed at the same time satisfaction and mockery. At that moment his foot stuck against an object on the floor, which gave out a strange sound. He picked it up and examined it in the light. It was a pair of spurs.

"Who has been here with you?" asked the Talmudist.

The Jewish Venus shrugged her shoulders contemptuously, but did not reply.

"Shall I tell you? The Captain of Hussars has been with you."

"And why should he not have been here with me?" she said, smoothing the fur on her jacket with her white hand.

"Woman! are you out of your mind?"

"I am in full possession of my senses," she replied, and a knowing smile hovered round her red voluptuous lips. "But must I not also do my part, in order that Messias may come and redeem us poor Jews?"

MAN WITH THE GOLDEN BRAIN

Alphonse Daudet

There was once a man who had a golden brain; yes, madam, a brain all of gold. When he came into the world, the physicians did not think that the child would live, his head was so heavy and his skull so huge. He did live, however, and grew in the sunlight like a fair olive-tree; only his large head always dragged him down, and it was pitiful to see him knocking against the furniture when he walked. He often fell. One day he rolled from the top of a flight of steps and struck his head against a marble stair, when his skull rang like an ingot. They thought him dead; but when they picked him up, they found only two or three drops of clotted gold in his blond hair. It was in this way that his parents learned that the child had a golden brain.

The matter was kept secret; the poor little fellow himself suspected nothing. Once in a while he would ask why they no longer allowed him to play in the street with the other boys.

"They would steal you, my beautiful treasure!" his mother would reply.

Then the child would be terribly afraid of being stolen; he would return to his solitary play without saying anything, and drag himself heavily about from room to room.

Only when he was eighteen years old did his parents

reveal to him the monstrous gift which he had received from fate; and as they had thus far brought him up and supported him, they asked in return for a little of his gold. The boy did not hesitate; on the spot—how and by what means the legend does not tell—he tore from his brain a lump of virgin gold, as large as a nut, which he threw proudly upon his mother's knees. Then, dazzled by the wealth which he bore in his brain, mad with passions, intoxicated by his power, he left his father's home and went through the world squandering his treasure.

From the manner in which he lived,—royally, and sowing his money broadcast,—one would have thought that his treasure was limitless. Nevertheless, his brain began to be exhausted, and proportionately his eyes could be seen to grow dim and his cheek hollow. One day, finally, on the morrow of a mad debauch, the poor wretch, left alone amidst the paling lights and the fragments of the feast, was appalled by the enormous breach which he had made in his ingot; it was time to stop.

From then on he led a new life. The man with the golden brain went off to live alone by the labour of his hands, timid and suspicious as a miser, flying from temptation, striving to forget the fatal wealth which he would not touch. Unhappily, a friend had followed him into his solitude; and this friend knew his secret.

One night the poor man was suddenly awakened by a pain in his head, a frightful pain; he sat up, terrified, and by a beam of moonlight saw his friend hurrying away with something concealed beneath his cloak.

Another bit of his brain stolen from him!

A little later the man with the golden brain fell in love, and this time it was all over with him. He loved with his whole soul a little blond woman, who also loved him well enough, but who loved still better pompons, white feathers, and pretty reddish tassels tapping the tops of her boots.

In the hands of this dainty creature—half bird and half doll—the bits of gold melted away like snow. She had a fancy for everything, and he could never say her nay; he even, for fear of paining her, concealed from her to the end the sad secret of his fortune.

"So we are very rich?" she would say.

"Oh, yes, very rich!" the poor man would reply.

And he would smile lovingly at the little bluebird which was unconsciously devouring his brain. Yet sometimes he would become frightened, and would long to be miserly; but then the little woman would come dancing to him and say,—

"My husband, you who are so rich, buy me something which costs a great deal."

And he would buy her something which cost a great deal.

This lasted for two years; then, one morning, the little woman died without their knowing why, like a bird. The treasure was nearing its end, but with what remained the widower gave his dear dead a splendid funeral. Bells pealing, heavy black-draped carriages, plumed horses, silver tears upon the velvet,—nothing seemed to him too fine. What did he care now for his gold? He gave of it to the church, to the bearers, to the sellers of immortelles; he gave everywhere, unquestioningly. And so, when he left the cemetery,

almost nothing of this marvellous brain remained, hardly a few grains on the walls of his skull.

Then he was seen wandering through the streets with a dazed look, with hands outstretched, and staggering like a drunken man. At night, at the hour when the bazaars were lighted, he stopped before a large show-window in which a mass of stuffs and jewelry glittered in the light, and remained a long while looking at a pair of blue satin boots trimmed with swan's-down. "I know somebody who would like those boots," he said to himself with a smile; and, already forgetting that his little wife was dead, he went in to buy them.

From her back room the shopkeeper heard a great cry; she hastened in, and recoiled with terror on seeing a man leaning against the counter and looking stupidly at her with an expression of pain. He had the blue boots with swan's-down trimming in one hand, and held out the other, all bloody, with scrapings of gold under his nails.

This, madam, is the legend of the man with the golden brain.

In spite of its likeness to a fantastic tale, this story is true from end to end. There are in the world poor folk who are condemned to live on their brains, and pay in pure gold, with their marrow and their substance, the smallest things in life. It is a daily pain to them; and then, when they are weary of suffering—

THE SCARLET SPHYNX

Alexandre Dumas

In the Louvre gallery exists a portrait by Philip de Champagne, Jansenist painter, representing life-like, the thinned, dry but vigorous countenance of Cardinal Richelieu.

Differently from his countrymen, the Flemish, or his masters, the Spanish, Philip de Champagne is not lavish of that bright hue which glowed on the palletes and shines on the canvas of Rubens and Murillo. Indeed, to have set under a ray of light the gloomy minister everlastingly suspected to be in the twilight of his policy, whose device was an eagle amid clouds (*Aquila in nubibus*) would doubtless have been flattering art, but assuredly gainsaying truth.

Study this portrait, all ye who would revive the illustrious man, two centuries and a half deceased, and form a mental and bodily idea of the great genius, calumniated by men of his time, misjudged, almost forgotten by the next generation, and only seen high in his place after a burial of two hundred times twelvemonth!

This picture is one of those having the privilege of stopping you and making you reflect. Is it a man or is it a phantom?

This creature in a scarlet robe, in white cape, with a Venetian point lace peaked collar, the forehead broad and high, grey hair, and grey moustache, eye grey too,

and emitting a glance like tarnished steel, the hands slender and bloodless. An undying fever has burnt away all the fuel on the face except where still its fire rages on the cheeks.

The more you contemplate, the less you think whether it be a human being or, like Saint Bonaventure, some corpse penning its memoirs after death.

If suddenly it should step from the canvas out of its frame and march towards you, you would recoil as from a ghost.

Visible and past dispute it is, that here is reproduced a soul, an intelligence. No heart, no bowels, happily for France. In the void of monarchy between the Fourth Henry and Louis Thirteenth, to lord it over the latter weak and powerless king, over the restless, dissolute court, over greedy, faithless princes, to level and harden that tossing slough, brain was needed and nought beside.

Providence fashioned that terrible automaton, and placed it at an equal distance from Louis XI and Robespierre, for him to fell the haughty nobles as Louis had abased the mighty vassals, as Robespierre was to cast down the aristocrats. Now and then like lurid comets in the horizon there is beheld one of such bloody mowers who seem a thing made by art, advancing without propulsion of their own, coming on noiselessly, and when they are arrived at the centre of the field to mow which is their mission, they fall to work and only cease when the task is over, when all the marked row is laid low.

Thus would he have appeared to you, as he lived in his study, brooding over the hates hissing at him,

full of the wide, wide projects that he had in hand, desirous of treading out heresy in his country, of hunting the Spaniards from the Milanese, of strangling Austrian influence in Tuscany, trying to guess, but closing his lips, subduing his eyes' fire for fear he would be unriddled, thus the man on whom was pivoted the destiny of France, the impenetrable premier whom Michelet, the historian, called the Scarlet Sphynx.

The queen-mother, Marie de Medici, hated Cardinal Richelieu for a host of reasons. The foremost and bitterest of all being that he had formerly obeyed her in all things, but now opposed her on every point; that Richelieu wished for the grandeur of his country and the downfall of Austria, while she sought the opposite; and lastly, that Richelieu wanted to make a Duke of Mantua out of a Nevers, to whom she wished all evil from the old rankle betwixt them.

Queen Anne of Austria hated Richelieu because he had thwarted her amour with Buckingham; diffused the news of the scandalous scene in the Amiens Gardens; exiled Lady Chevreuse from beside her; beaten the English with whom dwelt her heart, never French; Because she suspected him, without daring to say so openly, of having directed Felton's knife against the breast of the handsome duke; and, in short, because he persistently watched for any new love she might shamefully conceive, and because she felt that none of her actions, even the most hidden, escaped his notice.

The Duke of Orleans hated the prime minister, because he knew that he was aware how cowardly, wicked, ambitious he was, impatiently awaiting his

brother's death, capable of accelerating it if he got the chance; because he had prevented his admittance to the council, imprisoned his tutor, Ornano; had Chalais, his accomplice, beheaded; and the sole punishment to him who had plotted his murder, had enriched, while dishonoring him. Moreover, only caring for himself, he meant to wed the queen upon his brother's death, though she was seven years older than himself, but only in case she should be with child in her widowhood.

The king hated his minister because he saw that the cardinal was all genius, all love for his native land, while he was selfish, indifferent, enfeebled; because he saw he could only reign while the premier lived, and would reign, if at all, but poorly on his death.

He knew so well by what a thread hung not his power alone, but his very life. His horoscope was drawn with dagger points. He was aware that he stood where Henry IV was in 1606.

Everybody wanted him dead; and what was worse, Louis the King was not fond of his peaked visage. He alone upheld him, but at any moment Richelieu might stumble when this rocking step would roll aside.

As nothing would this have been, had this man of genius been hale and hearty like his idiotic rival, Berulle; but the lack of money, the continual strain on the mind to devise resources, a dozen court cabals which had to be faced at once, kept him ceaselessly in a dreadful fret. This was the fever purpling his cheekbone summits, while marbling his brow and making his hands like ivory. Add theological discussions, the verse-making fits, the necessity to put up with honey

and fury. Sad, day after day, burnt to the core with a red-hot iron, he dwelt on the brink of the grave.

Curious coupling this, of these two sick men. Fortunately without being sure though, the king felt that the realm would be lost should Richelieu depart, but, worse, Richelieu knew that, the sovereign dead, he had not a day's life in him. Hated by Gaston, by Anne of Austria, by the queen-mother, by Loissons, whom he exiled, by both the Vendomes, whom he imprisoned, by all the nobility whom he prevented from duelling in public, he might make up his mind to perish that same day, at least, as Louis XIII, the same hour if possible.

The Scarlet Sphynx could justify his pose.

BABABEC

VOLTAIRE

When I was in the city of Benarez, on the borders of the Ganges, the country of the ancient Brahmins, I endeavored to instruct myself in their religion and manners. I understood the Indian language tolerably well. I heard a great deal, and remarked everything. I lodged at the house of my correspondent Omri, who was the most worthy man I ever knew. He was of the religion of the Brahmins: I have the honor to be a Mussulman. We never exchanged one word higher than another about Mahomet or Brahma. We performed our ablutions each on his own side; we drank of the same sherbet, and we ate of the same rice, as if we had been two brothers.

One day we went together to the pagoda of Gavani. There we saw several bands of Fakirs. Some of whom were Janguis, that is to say, contemplative Fakirs; and others were disciples of the ancient Gymnosophists, who led an active life. They all have a learned language peculiar to themselves; it is that of the most ancient Brahmins; and they have a book written in this language, which they call the *Shasta*. It is, beyond all contradiction, the most ancient book in all Asia, not excepting the *Zend*.

I happened to cross in front of a Fakir, who was reading in this book.

"Ah! wretched infidel!" cried he, "thou hast made

me lose a number of vowels that I was counting, which will cause my soul to pass into the body of a hare instead of that of a parrot, with which I had before the greatest reason to flatter myself."

I gave him a rupee to comfort him for the accident. In going a few paces farther, I had the misfortune to sneeze. The noise I made roused a Fakir, who was in a trance.

"Heavens!" cried he, "what a dreadful noise. Where am I? I can no longer see the tip of my nose, —the heavenly light has disappeared."

"If I am the cause," said I, "of your not seeing farther than the length of your nose, here is a rupee to repair the great injury I have done you. Squint again, my friend, and resume the heavenly light."

Having thus brought myself off discreetly enough, I passed over to the side of the Gymnosophists, several of whom brought me a parcel of mighty pretty nails to drive into my arms and thighs, in honor of Brahma. I bought their nails, and made use of them to fasten down my boxes. Others were dancing upon their hands, others cut capers on the slack rope, and others went always upon one foot. There were some who dragged a heavy chain about with them, and others carried a packsaddle; some had their heads always in a bushel—the best people in the world to live with. My friend Omri took me to the cell of one of the most famous of these. His name was Bababec: he was as naked as he was born, and had a great chain about his neck, that weighed upwards of sixty pounds. He sat on a wooden chair, very neatly decorated with little points of nails that penetrated into his flesh; and you

would have thought he had been sitting on a velvet cushion. Numbers of women flocked to him to consult him. He was the oracle of all the families in the neighborhood; and was, truly speaking, in great reputation. I was witness to a long conversation that Omri had with him.

"Do you think, father," said my friend, "that after having gone through seven metempsichoses, I may at length arrive at the habitation of Brahma?"

"That is as it may happen," said the Fakir. "What sort of life do you lead?"

"I endeavor," answered Omri, "to be a good subject, a good husband, a good father, and a good friend. I lend money without interest to the rich who want it, and I give it to the poor: I always strive to preserve peace among my neighbors."

"But have you ever run nails into your flesh?" demanded the Brahmin.

"Never, reverend father."

"I am sorry for it," replied the father; "very sorry for it, indeed. It is a thousand pities; but you will certainly not reach above the nineteenth heaven."

"No higher!" said Omri. "In truth, I am very well contented with my lot. What is it to me whether I go into the nineteenth or the twentieth, provided I do my duty in my pilgrimage, and am well received at the end of my journey? Is it not as much as one can desire, to live with a fair character in this world, and be happy with Brahma in the next? And pray what heaven do you think of going to, good master Bababec, with your chain?"

"Into the thirty-fifth," said Bababec.

"I admire your modesty," replied Omri, "to pretend to be better lodged than me. This is surely the result of an excessive ambition. How can you, who condemn others that covet honors in this world, arrogate such distinguished ones to yourself in the next? What right have you to be better treated than me? Know that I bestow more alms to the poor in ten days, than the nails you run into your flesh cost for ten years? What is it to Brahma that you pass the whole day stark naked with a chain about your neck? This is doing a notable service to your country, doubtless! I have a thousand times more esteem for the man who sows pulse or plants trees, than for all your tribe, who look at the tips of their noses, or carry packsaddles, to show their magnanimity."

Having finished this speech, Omri softened his voice, embraced the Brahmin, and, with an endearing sweetness, besought him to throw aside his nails and his chain, to go home with him, and live in comfort.

The Fakir was persuaded: he was washed clean, rubbed with essences and perfumes, and clad in a decent habit; he lived a fortnight in this manner, behaved with prudence and wisdom, and acknowledged that he was a thousand times happier than before; but he lost his credit among the people; the women no longer crowded to consult him; he therefore quitted the house of the friendly Omri, and returned to his nails and his chain, *to regain his reputation.*

LA FONTAINE'S FIRST FABLE

Alexandre Dumas

The superintendent of state of Louis XIV, Fouquet, was in the habit of receiving his select confederacy of epicureans at Saint-Mandé. For some time past the host had met with nothing but trouble. Every one in the house was aware of and felt for the minister's distress. No more magnificent or recklessly improvident *réunions*. Money had been the pretext assigned by Fouquet, and never was any pretext, as more fallacious, for there was not even a shadow of money to be seen.

He was resolutely painstaking in keeping up the reputation of the house, and yet the gardeners who supplied the kitchens complained of ruinous delays. The agents for the supply of Spanish wines sent drafts which no one honored; fishermen, whom the superintendent engaged on the coast of Normandy, calculated that if they were paid all that was due to them, the amount would enable them to retire comfortably for life. However, on the ordinary reception days, Fouquet's friends flocked in more numerously than ever. Treasurer Gourville and Fouquet talked over money matters—that is to say, Fouquet borrowed a few pistoles from Gourville; Pélisson, seated with his legs crossed, was engaged in finishing the peroration of a speech with which Fouquet was to open the parliament; and this speech was a masterpiece, because Pélisson wrote it for his friend—that is to say, he in-

serted all kinds of clever things the latter would most certainly never have taken the trouble to say of his own accord. Presently Loret and La Fontaine would enter from the garden, engaged in a dispute about the art of making verses. The painters and musicians, in their turn, were hovering near the dining-room. As soon as eight o'clock struck the supper would be announced, for the superintendent never kept any one waiting. It was already half-past seven, and the appetites of the guests were beginning to declare themselves in an emphatic manner. As soon as all the guests were assembled, Gourville went straight up to Pélisson, awoke him out of his reverie, and led him into the middle of a room, and closed the doors. "Well," he said, "anything new?"

Pélisson raised his intelligent and gentle face, and said: "I have borrowed five and twenty thousand francs of my aunt, and I have them here in good sterling money."

"Good," replied Gourville; "we only want one hundred and ninety-five thousand livres for the first payment."

"The payment of what?" asked La Fontaine.

"What! absent-minded as usual! Why, it was you who told us the small estate at Corbeil was going to be sold by one of M. Fouquet's creditors; and you, also, who proposed that all his friends should subscribe —more than that, it was you who said that you would sell a corner of your house at Château-Thierry, in order to furnish your own proportion, and you come and ask—*'The payment of what?'*"

This remark was received with a general laugh,

which made La Fontaine blush. "I beg your pardon," he said, "I had not forgotten it; oh, no! only—"

"Only you remembered nothing about it," replied Loret.

"That is the truth, and the fact is, he is quite right, there is a great difference between forgetting and not remembering."

"Well, then," added Pélisson, "you bring your mite in the shape of the price of the piece of land you have sold?"

"Sold? No!"

"Have you not sold the field, then?" inquired Gourville, in astonishment, for he knew the poet's disinterestedness.

"My wife would not let me," replied the latter, at which there were fresh bursts of laughter.

"And yet you went to Château-Thierry for that purpose," said some one.

"Certainly I did, and on horseback."

"Poor fellow!"

"I had eight different horses, and I was almost bumped to death."

"You are an excellent fellow! And you rested yourself when you arrived there?"

"Rested! Oh! of course I did, for I had an immense deal of work to do."

"How so?"

"My wife had been flirting with the man to whom I wished to sell the land. The fellow drew back from his bargain, and so I challenged him."

"Very good, and you fought?"

"It seems not."

"You know nothing about it, I suppose?"

"No, my wife and her relations interfered in the matter. I was kept a quarter of an hour with my sword in my hand; but I was not wounded."

"And your adversary?"

"Oh! he wasn't wounded either, for he never came on the field."

"Capital!" cried his friends from all sides, "you must have been terribly angry."

"Exceedingly so; I caught cold; I returned home and then my wife began to quarrel with me."

"In real earnest?"

"Yes, in real earnest. She threw a loaf of bread at my head, a large loaf."

"And what did you do?"

"Oh! I upset the table over her and her guests; and then I got on my horse again, and here I am."

Every one had great difficulty in keeping his countenance at the exposure of this heroi-comedy, and when the laughter had subsided, one of the guests present said to La Fontaine: "Is that all you have brought back?"

"Oh, no! I have an excellent idea in my head."

"What is it?"

"Have you noticed that there is a good deal of sportive, jesting poetry written in France?"

"Yes, of course," replied every one.

"And," pursued La Fontaine, "only a very small portion of it is printed."

"The laws are strict, you know."

"That may be; but a rare article is a dear article, and that is the reason why I have written a small poem,

excessively free in its style, very broad, and extremely cynical in its tone."

"The deuce you have!"

"Yes," continued the poet, with assumed indifference, "and I have introduced the greatest freedom of language I could possibly employ."

Peals of laughter again broke forth, while the poet was thus announcing the quality of his wares. "And," he continued, "I have tried to excel everything that Boccaccio, Arétin, and other masters of their craft have written in the same style."

"Its fate is clear," said Pélisson; "it will be suppressed and forbidden."

"Do you think so?" said La Fontaine, simply. "I assure you I did not do it on my own account so much as M. Fouquet's."

This wonderful conclusion again raised the mirth of all present.

"And I have sold the first edition of this little book for eight hundred livres," exclaimed La Fontaine, rubbing his hands together. "Serious and religious books sell at about half that rate."

"It would have been better," said Gourville, "to have written two religious books instead."

"It would have been too long, and not amusing enough," replied La Fontaine tranquilly; "my eight hundred livres are in this little bag, and I beg to offer them as *my* contribution."

As he said this, he placed his offering in the hands of their treasurer; it was then Loret's turn, who gave a hundred and fifty livres; the others stripped themselves in the same way; and the total sum in the purse

amounted to forty thousand livres. The money was still being counted over when the superintendent noiselessly entered the room; he had heard everything; and then this man, who had possessed so many millions, who had exhausted all the pleasures and honors the world had to bestow, this generous heart, this inexhaustible brain, which had, like two burning crucibles, devoured the material and moral substance of the first kingdom in Europe, was seen to cross the threshold with tears in his eyes, and pass his fingers through the gold and silver which the bag contained.

"Poor offering," he said, in a softened and affected tone of voice, "you will disappear in the smallest corner of my empty purse, but you have filled to overflowing that which no one can ever exhaust, my heart. Thank you, my friends—thank you." And as he could not embrace every one present, who were all tearful, too, philosophers as they were, he embraced La Fontaine, saying to him, "Poor fellow! so you have, on my account, been beaten by your wife and censured by your confessor."

"Oh! it is a mere nothing," replied the poet; "if your creditors will only wait a couple of years, I shall have written a hundred other tales, which, at two editions each, will pay off the debt."

IN THE MOONLIGHT

Guy De Maupassant

Well-merited was the name, "soldier of God," by the Abbé Marignan. He was a tall, thin priest, fanatical to a degree, but just, and of an exalted soul. All his beliefs were fixed, with never a waver. He thought that he understood God thoroughly, that he penetrated His designs, His wishes, His intentions.

Striding up and down the garden walk of his little country parsonage, sometimes a question arose in his mind: "Why did God make that?" Then in his thoughts, putting himself in God's place, he searched obstinately, and nearly always was satisfied that he found the reason. He was not the man to murmur in transports of pious humility, "O Lord, thy ways are past finding out!" What he said was: "I am the servant of God; I ought to know the reason of what he does, or to divine it if I do not."

Everything in nature seemed to him created with an absolute and admirable logic. The "wherefore" and the "because" were always balanced. The dawns were made to rejoice you on waking, the days to ripen the harvests, the rains to water them, the evenings to prepare for sleeping, and the nights dark for sleep.

The four seasons corresponded perfectly to all the needs of agriculture; and to him the suspicion could never have come that nature has no intention, and that all which lives has accustomed itself, on the contrary,

to the hard conditions of different periods, of climates, and of matter.

But he hated women; he hated them unconsciously, and despised them by instinct. He often repeated the words of Christ, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" and he would add, "One would almost say that God himself was ill-pleased with that particular work of his hands." Woman for him was indeed the "child twelve times unclean" of whom the poet speaks. She was the temptress who had ensnared the first man, and who still continued her damnable work; she was the being who is feeble, dangerous, mysteriously troublous. And even more than her poisonous beauty, he hated her loving soul.

He had often felt women's tenderness attack him, and though he knew himself to be unassailable, he grew exasperated at this need of loving which quivers continually in their hearts.

To his mind, God had only created woman to tempt man and to test him. Man should not approach her without those precautions for defense which he would take, and the fears he would cherish, near an ambush. Woman, indeed, was just like a trap, with her arms extended and her lips open toward a man.

He had toleration only for nuns, rendered harmless by their vow; but he treated them harshly notwithstanding, because, ever at the bottom of their chained-up hearts, their chastened hearts, he perceived the eternal tenderness that constantly went out even to him, although he was a priest.

He had a niece who lived with her mother in a little

house near by. He was bent on making her a sister of charity. She was pretty and hare-brained, and a great tease. When the abbé sermonized, she laughed; when he was angry at her, she kissed him vehemently, pressing him to her heart, while he would seek involuntarily to free himself from her embrace. Notwithstanding, it made him taste a certain sweet joy, awaking deep within him that sensation of fatherhood which slumbers in every man.

Often he talked to her of God, of his God, walking beside her along the footpaths through the fields. She hardly listened, but looked at the sky, the grass, the flowers, with a joy of living which could be seen in her eyes. Sometimes she rushed forward to catch some flying creature, and bringing it back would cry: "Look, my uncle, how pretty it is; I should like to kiss it." And this necessity to "kiss flies" or sweet flowers worried, irritated, and revolted the priest, who saw, even in that, the ineradicable tenderness which ever springs in the hearts of women.

One day the sacristan's wife, who kept house for the Abbé Marignan, told him, very cautiously, that his niece had a lover!

He experienced a dreadful emotion, and he stood choking, with the soap all over his face, in the act of shaving.

When he found himself able to think and speak once more, he cried: "It is not true; you are lying, Melanie!"

But the peasant woman put her hand on her heart; "May our Lord judge me if I am lying, Monsieur le

Curé I tell you she goes to him every evening as soon as your sister is in bed. They meet each other beside the river. You have only to go there between ten o'clock and midnight, and see for yourself."

He ceased scratching his chin and commenced to pace the room quickly, as he always did in his hours of gravest thought. When he tried to begin his shaving again, he cut himself three times from nose to ear.

All day long, he remained silent, swollen with anger and with rage. To his priestly zeal against the mighty power of love was added the moral indignation of a father, of a teacher, of a keeper of souls, who has been deceived, robbed, played with by a child. He felt the egotistical sorrow that parents feel when their daughter announces that she has chosen a husband without them and in spite of their advice.

After his dinner, he tried to read a little, but he could not attune himself to it; and he grew angrier and angrier. When it struck ten, he took his cane, a formidable oaken club which he always carried when he had to go out at night to visit the sick. Smilingly he regarded the enormous cudgel, holding it in his solid, countryman's fist and cutting threatening circles with it in the air. Then, suddenly, he raised it, and grinding his teeth, he brought it down upon a chair, the back of which, split in two, fell heavily to the ground.

He opened his door to go out; but he stopped upon the threshold, surprised by such a splendor of moonlight as you seldom see.

Endowed as he was with an exalted spirit, such a spirit as must have belonged to those dreamer-poets,

the Fathers of the Church, he felt himself suddenly softened and moved by the grand and serene beauty of the pale-faced night.

In his little garden, bathed in the soft brilliance, his fruit-trees, all a-row, were outlining in shadow upon the walk their slender limbs of wood scarce clothed with green; while the giant honeysuckle climbing on the house wall exhaled delicious, sugared breaths, which hovered through the warm, clear night like a perfumed soul.

He began to breathe deep, drinking the air as drunkards drink their wine, and walking slowly, ravished, surprised, and almost oblivious of his niece.

As he stepped into the open country he stopped to contemplate the whole plain, inundated by this caressing radiance, and drowned in the tender and languishing charm of the serene night. In chorus the frogs threw into space their short, metallic notes, and with the seduction of the moonlight, distant nightingales mingled that fitful music of theirs which brings no thoughts but dreams, a light and vibrant melody which seems attuned to kisses.

The abbé continued his walk, his courage failing, he knew not why. He felt, as it were, enfeebled, and suddenly exhausted; he had a great desire to sit down, to pause right there and praise God in all His works.

Below him, following the bends of the little river, wound a great line of poplars. On and about the banks, wrapping all the tortuous watercourse in a kind of light, transparent wadding, hung suspended a fine mist, a white vapor, which the moon-rays crossed, and silvered, and caused to gleam.

The priest paused yet again, penetrated to the depths of his soul by a strong and growing emotion. And a doubt, a vague uneasiness, seized on him; he felt that one of those questions he sometimes put to himself was now being born.

Why had God done this? Since the night is destined for sleep, for unconsciousness, for repose, for forgetfulness of everything, why, then, make it more charming than the day, sweeter than dawns and sunsets? And this slow, seductive star, more poetical than the sun and so discreet, that it seems designed to light up things too delicate, too mysterious, for the great luminary,—why had it come to brighten all the shades? Why did not the sweetest of all songsters go to rest like the others? Why set himself to singing in the vaguely troubling dark? Why this half-veil over the world? Why these quiverings of the heart, this emotion of the soul, this languor of the body? Why this display of seductions which mankind never sees, since night brings sleep? For whom was this sublime spectacle intended, this flood of poetry poured from heaven to earth? The abbé did not understand it at all.

But then, down there along the edge of the pasture appeared two shadows walking side by side under the arched roof of the trees all soaked in glittering mist.

The man was the taller, and had his arm about his mistress's neck; from time to time he kissed her on the forehead. They animated the lifeless landscape which enveloped them, a divine frame made, as it were, expressly for them. They seemed these two, a single being, the being for whom this calm and silent night was destined; and they approached the priest like a living

answer, the answer vouchsafed by his Master to his question.

He stood stock-still, overwhelmed, and with a beating heart. He likened it to some Bible story, such as the loves of Ruth and Boaz, the accomplishment of the will of the Lord in one of those great scenes talked of in holy writ. Through his head ran the versicles of the Song of Songs, the ardent cries, the calls of the body, all the passionate poetry of that poem which burns with tenderness and love. And he said to himself, "God perhaps has made such nights as this to clothe with his ideals the loves of men."

He withdrew before the couple, who went on arm in arm. It was really his niece; and now he asked himself if he had not been about to disobey God. For does not God indeed permit love, since He surrounds it visibly with splendor such as this?

And he fled, in amaze, almost ashamed, as if he had penetrated into a temple where he had no right to enter.

A PERENNIAL VENUS

Alexandre Dumas

Diane de Poitiers, Comtesse de Brézé, was the daughter of that Sieur de Saint-Vallier, who, as an accomplice of the Connétable de Bourbon, had been condemned to be beheaded on the Grève, and who, when kneeling under the sword of the executioner, had been pardoned,—if the thing can be called a pardon,—and had his sentence commuted to perpetual imprisonment "within four walls, the floor and roof both built of stone, and with one little window only, through which he was to receive whatever he ate and drank."

Everything connected with Diane was mystery and marvel. She was born in 1499, and had, at the period we are describing, reached the age of fifty-eight years; yet, by her apparent youth and real beauty, she threw the fairest and youngest princesses of the court into the shade; so that the king loved her before all and above all.

Some of the mysteries and marvellous things told of the fair Diane, who had been created Duchesse de Valentinois by Henri II in 1548, were the following:—

In the first place, she was most undoubtedly descended from the fairy Mélusine, and the king's love and her wonderfully preserved beauty were both results of this descent. Diane de Poitiers inherited from her ancestress, the great sorceress, the double secret, a secret

rare and magical, of being always beautiful and always beloved.

Diane, it was stated, owed this eternal beauty to soups composed of potable gold. We know what an important ingredient was potable gold in the chemical preparations of the middle ages.

This love without end was due to a magical ring the king had received from her, and which had the virtue of binding his love to her as long as he wore it.

The last report attained particular credit, for Madame de Nemours used to relate, to all who cared to listen, the anecdote we are about to relate in our turn.

The king having fallen sick, Queen Catherine de Médicis said to Madame de Nemours:—

"My dear duchess, the king has a great affection for you. Go to his chamber, sit near the bed, and, while talking with him, try to take from the third finger of the left hand the ring he wears on it; it is a talisman given him by Madame de Valentinois to make him love her."

Now, nobody in the court felt any very deep affection for Madame de Valentinois, not that she was ill-natured, but the young did not like her because she was so obstinate in continuing young, and the old women detested her because she would not become old. Madame de Nemours willingly took charge of the commission; and, having made her way into the King's chamber, and sat down near the bed, she succeeded in sportively drawing the ring from Henri's finger, he himself being quite ignorant of its virtue. But the ring was scarcely off the sick man's finger when he begged Madame de Nemours to whistle for his *valet*

de chambre. We know that, up to the time of Madame de Maintenon, who invented bells, the gold or silver whistle was used by kings, princes, and great lords for summoning their people. The sick man then had begged Madame de Nemours to whistle for his *valet de chambre,* who having entered immediately, received the king's offer to close his doors to all comers.

"Even to Madame de Valentinois?" asked the astonished valet.

"To Madame de Valentinois as to others," answered the king, sharply; "the order admits no exception."

A quarter of an hour afterwards Madame de Valentinois presented herself at the king's door, and was refused admittance.

She returned at the end of an hour: same refusal. Finally, at the end of two hours, in spite of a third refusal, she forced the door, entered, marched straight up to the king, took his hand, perceived that the ring was missing, made him confess what had passed, and insisted on Henri's getting the ring back from Madame de Nemours. The king's order to surrender the precious jewel was so peremptory that Madame de Nemours, who had not yet delivered it to Catherine de Médicis, grew frightened at the consequences, and sent it back. The ring once again on the king's finger, the fairy resumed all her power, which, indeed, since that day had gone on increasing.

In spite of the grave authorities who relate the history,—and note well that for the potable gold we have no less a witness than Brantôme, while to the truth of the affair of the ring, we have the solemn affirmations of De Thou and Pasquier,—we are tempted to believe

that the beauty of Diane de Poitiers was unconnected with the miraculous, a beauty which was to have its counterpart a hundred years later in the case of Ninon de Lenclos; and we are disposed to accept, as the only and true magic used by her, that contained in the receipt she gave to any one for the asking; namely, a *bath of spring water* in all weathers, even the coldest. Besides every morning she rose with the lark, rode for two hours, and on her return went to bed again, where she stayed till noon, reading, or chatting with her women.

But this has not been all: everything in connection with the fair Diane has been a subject of controversy, and the gravest historians would seem, in her regard, to have forgotten this first condition of history, which is to always have the proof standing behind the accusation.

Mézeray relates—and we are not sorry to catch Mézeray in a blunder—that François I. granted the pardon of Jean de Poitiers, father of Diane, only after he had deprived the daughter *of the most valuable thing she possessed.* Now this took place in 1523; Diane, born in 1499, was twenty-four at the time, and had been married to Louis de Brézé for ten years. We do not say that François I., a monarch chary in exacting his dues, did not impose certain conditions on the fair Diane; but it was not, as Mézeray says, on a young girl of fourteen that he imposed these conditions, and unless we want to calumniate poor M. de Brézé, to whom his widow raised that magnificent monument still admired in Rouen, we cannot imagine he allowed the king to deprive a woman of twenty-four of the most valuable things she possessed at fourteen.

All we have written has, for that matter, only one object: to prove to our fair readers that the history written by romancers is far superior to the history written by historians; in the first place, because it is truer, and in the second, because it is more amusing.

To make a long story short, Diane, though at this period twenty-six years a widow, and twenty-one years King Henri's mistress, had, in spite of the fact that she was fully fifty-eight, the smoothest and loveliest complexion that could be seen, curly hair of the most bewitching black, a form of admirable symmetry, and a faultless neck and throat.

This was the opinion of old Connétable Montmorency, who, notwithstanding his sixty-four years, claimed to enjoy quite peculiar privileges in the case of the beautiful duchess,—privileges which would have rendered the king very jealous, if it were not an admitted fact that it is always the people interested in being the first to know a thing who know it last, and sometimes never know it at all.

If any woman in that graceful, lettered, and gallant court deserved a portrait, surely it was she who made her royal lover wear her colours as a widow,—black and white,—and adopt the crescent for an escutcheon inspired by her fine pagan name of Diane, with these words for a motto: *Donec totum impleat orbem!*

COUNT MORTIER, THE MADMAN

VICTOR HUGO

November 11, 1846.

Yesterday Chancellor Pasquier comes to the house of Mme. de Boignes, and finds her in great agitation, holding a letter in her hand. "What is the matter, madame?" "This letter which I have received. Read it." The chancellor took the letter; it was signed "Mortier," and said, in effect, "Madame, when you read this letter my two children and myself will no longer be alive."

It was Count Mortier, a Peer of France, and formerly an ambassador, but where I cannot remember, who wrote. M. Pasquier was much concerned. M. Mortier was known as a confirmed hypochondriac. Four years ago, at Bruges, he ran after his wife with a razor in his hand, with the intention of killing her. A month ago he made a similar attempt, which led to a separation, by the terms of which M. Mortier retained the custody of the children, a little boy of seven years of age and a little girl of five. His hypochondria was caused, it appears, by jealousy, and developed into uncontrollable passion.

The chancellor sends for his carriage, and does not take a chair. "Where does M. Mortier live?" "In the Rue Neuve Saint-Augustin, in the Hôtel Chatham," said Mme. de Boignes.

M. Pasquier arrives at the Hôtel Chatham; he finds

the staircase crowded, a commissary of police, a locksmith with his bunch of keys, the door barricaded. The alarm had been given. They were going to break open the door.

"I forbid you," said the chancellor. "You would exasperate him, and if the mischief were not yet done he would do it."

For some time, however, M. Mortier had not answered. There was nothing but a profound silence behind the door,—a terrible silence, for it seemed that if the children were still living they would be crying. "It seemed," said the chancellor, when he told me this to-day, "as if it was the door of a tomb."

The chancellor called out his name: "Count Mortier, it is I, M. Pasquier, the chancellor, your colleague. You know my voice, do you not?"

To this a voice replied, "Yes."

It was the voice of M. Mortier.

The on-lookers breathed again.

"Well," continued M. Pasquier, "you know me; open the door."

"No," replied the same voice. Then it obstinately refused to speak again. All was silent once more.

This happened several times. He replied, the dialogue continued, he refused to open, then he remained silent. Those outside trembled for fear that in these brief intervals of silence he might do the dreadful deed.

In the meantime the prefect of police had arrived.

"It is I, your colleague, Delessert, and your old friend." (They were school-fellows, I think.)

This parleying lasts for more than an hour. At

length he consents to open the door provided they give him their word they will not enter. The word is given; he half opens the door; they go in.

He was in the anteroom, with an open razor in his hand; behind him was the inner door of his rooms, locked and with the key removed. He appeared frenzied.

"If any one approaches me," he said, "there will be an end of him and me. I will remain alone with Delessert and speak to him; I consent to that."

A risky conversation this, with a furious man armed with a razor. M. Delessert, who behaved bravely, asked every one else to withdraw, remained alone with M. Mortier, and after a refusal, which lasted for a space of twenty minutes, persuaded him to put down the razor.

Once disarmed, he was secured.

But were the children dead or living? It was terrible to reflect upon. To all questions on the subject he replied, "It is nothing to do with you."

The inner door is broken open, and what is found at the farther end of the rooms? The two children, crouching under the furniture.

This is what had happened.

In the morning M. Mortier said to his children, "I am very unhappy. You love me, and I love you. I am going to die. Will you die with me?"

The little boy said, resolutely, "No, papa."

As for the little girl, she hesitated. In order to persuade her the father passed the back of the razor gently around her neck, and said to her, "There, my dear, it will not hurt you any more than that."

"Well, then, papa," said the child, "I do not mind dying."

The father goes out, probably to fetch a second razor. Directly he goes out, the little boy rushes to the key, lays hold of it, shuts the door, and locks it twice on the inside.

Then he takes his sister to the furthermost end of the rooms and gets under the furniture with her.

The doctors declared that Count Mortier was a melancholy and dangerous madman. He was taken to a mad-house.

He had a mania, in fact, for razors. When he was seized he was searched; besides that which he had in his hand, one was found in each of his pockets.

On the same day the news arrived in Paris that my colleague, Count Bresson, had cut his throat at Naples, where he had recently been appointed Ambassador.

This was a grief to us all, and a great surprise. From a mere worldly point of view, Count Bresson wanted nothing. He was a Peer of France, an ambassador, a Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour. His son had lately been created a Duke in Spain. As an ambassador he had a salary of two hundred thousand francs a year. He was an earnest, kindly, gentle, intelligent, sensible man, very rational in everything, of high stature, with broad shoulders, a good square face, and at fifty-five years of age looked only forty; he had wealth, greatness, dignity, intelligence, health, and was fortunate in private as in public life. He killed himself.

Nourrit also went to Naples and killed himself.

Is it the climate? Is it the marvellous sky?

Spleen is engendered just as much under a blue sky as under a gloomy sky,—more so, perhaps.

As the life of even the most prosperous man is always in reality more sad than gay, a gloomy sky is in harmony with ourselves. A brilliant and joyous sky mocks us. Nature in its sad aspects resembles us and consoles us; Nature, when radiant, impassive, serene, magnificent, transplendent, young while we grow old, smiling when we are sighing, superb, inaccessible, eternal, contented, calm in its joyousness, has in it something oppressive.

By dint of contemplating the sky,—ruthless, unrelenting, indifferent, and sublime,—one takes a razor and makes an end of it.